



# GOD OF COOKING

BOOK 01

*Boötes*

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# God of Cooking

(요리의 신)

by

**Boötes**

(양치기자리)

# Synopsis

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30 years old Jo Minjoon had always wanted to become a chef.

However, he started his culinary career late in life and is chopping onions at a restaurant.

Regretting his life choices, he wishes he could go back and change it all and falls asleep.

Meanwhile, someone is willing to give him another chance and send him back in time.

How will he use his new powers obtained from this mysterious being?

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# Prologue

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Tic Toc Tic Toc.

Inside an empty kitchen, Jo Minjoon quietly stared at the clock. Don't go. Stop. Despite his silent scream, the clock hand continued to move diligently, like it always does.

Eleven fifty-nine and fifty-seven seconds. fifty eight seconds. fifty nine seconds. And 12 O'clock.....

It was New Year's Eve. And he was at the end of his twenties, as well as the beginning of his thirties. Jo Minjoon sighed deeply as sudden fatigue enveloped him. Time was moving slowly, and he thought to himself, compared to the amount of time spent, he did not gain anything.

Jo Minjoon was a highschool teacher. Precisely speaking, an english teacher. Like all teaching jobs, it wasn't that successful of a career, but neither was a failure. Right. At least, it was like that until spring of his twenty eighth year. But in March, Jo Minjoon resigned from his teaching position.

He knew that teaching, wasn't meant for him. He didn't even think of becoming a teacher once. What Jo Minjoon aspired to be ever since he was young was to become a chef. However, he couldn't go against parent's will. At that time, Jo Minjoon had a decent grade, and he had already been accepted to a college through early decision. So, when he said he wanted to become a chef, what kind of parents would support that kind of rash



decision.

10 Years passed after that. Jo Minjoon followed his parents wishes, and was able to find his place at a high school. However, that was it. His parent kept saying that he will thank them one day... but that was not it. Yes, the job was stable, but Jo Minjoon only felt vanity from his job. So in the end, he resigned.

After that, he started to work in a restaurant. He found a job as a dishwasher in a famous restaurant in Gangnam. He washed dishes for half a year, and after one year, he started making salads and other sloppy side dishes. That was all he had accomplished in his thirty years of life. Someone who had nowhere to go in New Year's day, sitting as time went by in a dark empty kitchen.

There was no point complaining about it now. Because t was a choice he had made. So, he had no right to complain about his current frustrating life. Then, suddenly the sound of chime rang, and the lights lit up in the restaurant.

“Oh, Minjoon hyung. You were still here?”

It was Park Yooseok. He was two years younger than him, but he was his superior. He was lined up to become the head chef in a few years.

“Ah, yes. Sunbae. What brings you here?” (\*Sunbae = equivalent to the japanese “Senpai”. Designates a senior in work or study.)

Jo Minjoon was using honorifics to speak to him. He had no choice. It was because the hierarchy of the cooking world was very strong. Park Yooseok pretended like he was uncomfortable at the honorifics, but secretly he enjoyed it. Park Yooseok took out a wallet from a corner of the kitchen, and then shook it in front of Jo Minjoon.

“Ah, what a relief, I think i left something somewhere. Hyung. Peel those garlic while I go get it. Seemed like we were out of garlies. Since you are here already, it would be better to peel them now rather than doing it tomorrow morning, no?

“I’m a little tired right now.”

“Ha.....hyung. Please Help me keep my good manners towards elders. Other hoobaes, never talk back to me when I ask them to do these little chores.” (\*Hoobae = equivalent to the japanese “Koohai”, designates a junior in work or study)

“.....Understood.”

“I’ll be leaving now. Take care.”

Park Yooseok left after that. But He picked up what Park Yooseok’s mumbling before he left. “Does he think he’s all that because he’s older? So fucking scary” Jo Minjoon couldn’t do anything but stared at the back of Park Yooseok. Even though we was mad, he couldn’t say anything . If he did, he would become known as reckless, and someone who disregards the hierarchy. He had no choice to swallow his anger.

“Garlic my ass.”

But still Jo Minjoon was taking the garlies out of the kitchen

refrigerator. After peeling garlies for a while, Jo Minjoon turned on his smartphone. And he went into his blog. His blog was the only thing that soothed him these days. There were posts about dishes that he made, and the comments that gets posted on those. When he read those, it gave him peace of mind.

Jo Min Joon clicked on the “write post” button. The subject was simple. New Year’s greetings. Even the content was simple and boring.

There were no comment for about 10 minutes. Because Jo Minjoon wasn’t a famous blogger or anything. When he was taking notes off of other blogs cooking recipes, he received a comment notification. It was a familiar nickname.

CookingGuru : JoChef-nim Happy New Year~ ^^ Your New Year’s greeting was the first. (\*nim = honorific calling somebody higher, a customer or as to be polite. Equivalent to the japanese “-sama”)

[JoChef] was Jo Minjoon’s nickname. Even though it was just one person, his sadness loosened up a little. Jo Minjoon quickly replied.

JoChef: Happy New years to you too, CookingGuru-nim. Your greeting was also my first .

CookingGuru: hehe hmm there were no posts about dinner, dont tell me you didn’t eat?

JoChef: Somehow it ended up being like that. T\_\_T



For a while, the two exchanged surface level conversation. It was after about 10 comments were exchanged, the conversation became deeper.

CookingGuru: Then JoChef-nim is still in his 2nd year?

JoChef: Yes, although i flaunt myself a little in my blog with my cooking, but I just peel garlic in some restaurant. lol..

CookingGuru: Ah.. its a pity. If you changed your path just a little bit younger, I'm sure you would've be in a better situation.

JoChef: What can I do. It's my fault. I didn't have the courage back then. I realized it too late, that everyone has their own path.

CookingGuru: If you could return to when you were younger, would you jump in to the world of cooking right away?

JoChef: Yes, I would. Now I am certain which path is my path. Of course it's pretty rough right now but still...

After that comment, there were no other comment for a quite a while. Maybe he became tired of such a deep conversation. It was a bit depressing topic to talk about in New Years. Jo Minjoon rested his head on a table outside, and closed his eyes. He was sleepy. Tired. He did not want to think about anything.

It was after around 10 minutes after Jo Minjoon fell asleep. His dark phone screen illuminated brightly with a comment alarm.

NEW CookingGuru: Sure. Return to when you were younger. I would like to see your youthful pursuit of your path too.

## Glossary

Hyung : Big/older brother. Kind of an equivalent to the japanese “onii-san” but only used between male (male to male).

# Chapter 1: Back To 7 Years Ago (1)

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“Wake up. Minjoon, Jo Minjoon!”

Jo Minjoon opened his eyes with a frown to the ringing of the loud voice. He was sure that he slept at the restaurant, so why was he home? While he was dazed and confused about his situation, Lee Hyesun opened her mouth again.

“What are you blanking out for? Hurry and wake up. It’s 10 already.”

“..... 10? It’s 10? Oh my God. Why didn’t you wake me up earlier?”

“What are you blabbering about. You’re taking a break from school?”

“What? There’s no break at the restaurant! I have to go to work!”

“Restaurant? You’re funny. Did you have a dream about being a chef or something? Get a hold of yourself Jo Minjoon! You are a college student!”

“..... what?”

A dream about being a chef? She probably said that because I was working at the restaurant. But a college student? Jo Minjoon

suddenly felt strange.

Jo Minjoon looked around his house by reflex. The chair that broke three years ago was standing by the table, as nothing has happened. The TV that they threw because of bad quality was sitting there in the living room, like it was its place. Jo Minjoon asked with a dazed voice.

“Mom, what... year was it?”

“What? what are you saying. Are you okay? Wake up already.”

“What year is it?”

“It’s 2010! Hurry and wash up and come to eat. Food’s going to get cold.”

2010. Then this was the year he was discharged from the army. Jo Minjoon washed up sloppily, still lost and confused. At Lee Hyesun’s urging, he sat at the table. At that moment, something like a computer screen popped up in front of Jo Minjoon

[White Rice]

Freshness: 73%

Origin: Go Ryung, South Korea

Quality: High

Cooking score: 5/10

“..... huh?”

Jo Minjoon rubbed his eyes, and stared at the rice blankly. What

am I looking at? Did i go insane? Or am I still in a dream? He could only think of such things.

But the screen did not disappear even after he closed his eyes. In confusion, Jo Minjoon turned and stared at a doenjang jjigae. This time too, the screen popped up.

[[doenjang jjigae](#)]

Freshness: 90%

Origin: (hidden. It contains too many ingredients)

Quality: Medium (Ingredient average)

Cooking Score; 4/10

“Did I read too much fantasy novels these days.....?”

“What? Are you reading things like those instead of studying these days?”

“Ah, no. Mom. That’s not what I’m saying....”

“Don’t you know how hard your dad works? Use your time wisely for your dad and mom!”

So much nagging for reading some novel. It’s something that he hadn’t experienced much after graduating college. But he missed those nagging sometimes.

‘Did I.... return to 7 years ago?’

He remembered the conversation with CookingGuru. He didn’t want to believe it but given this ridiculous situation, he was only

able to come up with one conclusion.

‘So he sent me back to the past.’

When he he thought about that conclusion, the reason behind followed. The CookingGuru asked if he were to return to his younger days, would he jump in the the world of cooking without any hesitation. And to that Jo Minjoon answered yes. He is that cooking is his path.

Honestly, rather than being happy, he was more distraught and confused. But even if he kept thinking about it, there were nothing logical he can come up with. Jo Min Joon lifted his spoon and brought some of the doenjang jjigae up to his mouth. It was at that moment another screen popped up.

[You have mastered Lee Hyesun’s doenjang jjigae recipe]

Mix strong doenjang with regular doenjang at 2:1 ratio, then add water three times the amount of doenjang. Add the potato first and boil until water level goes down a bit, then add half of onion, and one block of tofu. And then, add one teaspoon of dry anchovy seasoning (basically MSG), stir and boil until the stew is done.

‘..... She said she doesn’t put in MSG.’

Now more than the mysterious screen that pops up, those little details caught his attentions. He said you wouldn’t be able to get this flavor without adding MSG multiple times, his mom always



denied such usage. As he was giving Lee Hyesun ‘Of course it was’ look, she clicked her tongue at him. (\*TL note : Korean parent’s do this A LOT when their kid does something bad)

“Why are you not eating? Are you already complaining about the food? Here I thought that you’d get better after serving in the army....”

When she said that, a terrible thought came up. If he returned even a bit earlier. To when he was 21, 22, when he was still serving in the army.....

Thank you so much, Cooking Guru.

What I said about cooking, I will make them come true.

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The lunch time was ending. Maybe it was because he ate around 10, he was not really hungry. So, he was able to go deeper into his thoughts. He was 30 years old. He was a high school english teacher, and aspired to become a chef. And now he was 23 years old. He was a college student, and he was preparing to return to school.

“..... what should I do.”

The moment he returned to the past, his mind was already set. This was his final chance. He didn't want to hesitate this time and jump into the world of cooking late. But his parent's would not allow him to quit school and pursuit a life of a chef blindly. First he had to show his parents what he could do.

Jo Minjoon went out into the living room. Lee Hyesun was folding laundry while she was watching TV. Jo Min Joon spoke up.

“Mom, do you want me to make you a simple snack?”

“You're gonna cook?”

“I made you food food before. There's something I've been practicing”

“Alright, let's see how good my son's cooking is.”

As soon as she said that, Jo Minjoon headed straight to the refrigerator. Although Lee Hyesun didn't really enjoy cooking, she still had 3 fridges, one being a special fridge for [Kimchis](#). Because of that, there were a lot of ingredients that's been sitting in the fridge for a long time. His father, Jo Sooyeop, always complained about Lee Hyesun letting all those food going to waste.

“Let's see....”

[Large Egg]

Freshness: 85%

Origin: Nam Yang, South Korea

Quality: Medium

These screens that pop up suddenly without notice sometimes confounded him. First, Jo Minjoon put the egg in the bowl. And then he grabbed lemon, sugar, and starch. There was a dish that popped into his head when he saw the egg. It was a dish that was pretty simple, but still needed a quite of bit of work. Souffle. A bread that look like a muffin, but softer than custard.

The quality of souffle depended heavily on the skill of the chef. So much that, there is a saying that all the other food at a restaurant that make good souffle are all good.

There was a phase when he was really into souffle. If he didn't eat souffle for dessert after all three meals a day, he thought he was going to died. Of course, after making souffle like there was no tomorrow, he got tired of it. But still, it's something that he made at least once a week.

He was confident. First Jo Minjoon preheated the oven, and separate the egg whites into a bowl. It was egg whites from total two eggs. Then, he added a large spoonful of sugar, and mixed well. Next was simple, whipping it like his life depended on it.

The sound coming from the kitchen intrigued Lee Hyesun. She raised her voice and asked.

“What’s making so much noise?”

“I’m making bread”

“Bread? you can make something like that?”

“Just wait. It’ll be good”

Jo Minjoon kept turning his arm. If you keep whipping egg whites, bubble form. If you whip more and those bubble harden into actual creme, that was meringue.

What’s so hard about whipping some egg, one might ask, but making meringue took quite a toll on the arm muscles. It’s something you had to spin with an right arm, and then the left arm when the arm gets tired. Of course, you can only spin in one direction. If you spun it the other way, the bubbles you worked so hard to make would disappear.

It took him almost 4 minutes just to make the meringue. Jo Minjoon took a deep breath and looked at the meringue.

[Meringue]

Freshness: 85%

Origin: (Hidden. Too many ingredients)

Quality: Medium (Ingredient average)

Cooking Score: 5/10

He put much effort into making it, but the cooking score was only 5/10. But he understood why. He added sugar right from the beginning, instead of mixing it in during the middle. It’s not the standard way of making it.

Jo Minjoon licked his lips, and cut the lemon into half. Then he filtered the lemon juice through the sieve, then stirred it into the meringue. Slowly the color of the meringue changed to light yellow, and it starting giving off the fresh sour scent. At this point, the dish was half way done.

Jo Minjoon rubbed butter and sugar on a mug, and carefully poured the prepared meringue into it. He thought that two mugs would've been enough, but there was little bit more, which he put into a coffee cup. The next step was simple. Jo minjoon put the mugs on the cookie tray, and put them in the pre heated oven.

The next step was simple. Put sugar and starch into a mixer, and create sugar powder. After a while, when he heard the oven beep, Jo Minjoon took out the souffle, and sprinkled the sugar powder filtered over strainer.

That was the end. Light lemon colored souffle, with white sugar powder resting on it, like snowflakes. Jo Minjoon looked at the screened that popped up on top of the souffle.

[Lemon Souffle]

Freshness: 98%

Origin: (Hidden. Contains multiple ingredients)

Quality: Medium (Ingredient Average)

Cooking Score: 6/10

6 Points. Jo Minjoon prepared his dancing tastebuds, and ate a spoonful of souffle in the smallest cup. It was soft, but still had a

rough texture like scrambled eggs. It was soft like fresh snow smooshing under a shoe, which added stimulation to his tongue. The favor was the best part as always. Mixture of sour and sweet flavor, was one of his favorite flavors.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Mom, It’s done.”

“Okay. Bring it here.”

“.... Alright.”

No sincerity even though he put in so much effort. Jo Minjoon brought the souffle to her. He was confident that she will be surprised after a single bite.

And his expectation did not go wrong. Lee Hye Sun’s eyes popped open wide, and looked back and forth at the souffle and Jo Minjoon.

“You.. made this?”

“Then you think a Snail Bride made it or what?”

(\*TL note : Snail Bride.우렁각시. She comes out of one of Korean folk tales. Where a snail turns into a woman, and becomes a bride of a good hearted farmer, who saved her)

Lee Hyesun picked up a spoon as she said that. And after poking the lemon souffle, she let out a gasp.



“Wow..... it’s so soft!”

And then one bite. That was the finale. Lee Hyesun chewed the souffle, and took another bite quickly. And then stared at Jo Minjoon in awe.

“.....Hey.. do you take cooking classes in secret?”

Jo Minjoon smirked without saying anything. It was at that moment.

[Lee Hyesun is amazed by your ‘lemon souffle’!]

[The exp rises rapidly due to the cooking skill that exceeds the current level!]

[Baking level increased!]

[Cooking level increased!]

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Translator’s note:

All korean male citizens are required to serve around 22 months in the army depending on their MOS, basically marines do less with 18 while infantries do 22. It’s something every guy has to do, and something not a lot of guy looks forward to.

## Chapter 2: Back To 7 Years Ago (2)

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“Status Window”

[Jo Minjoon]

Cooking Level: 5

Baking Level: 4

Tasting Level:6

Decoration Level:4

He had some thoughts about his situation, but he never imagined that he'd see something like this. It was as if his life became a cooking game. He stared at the screen with an indescribable and confused feeling for a while, then turned his head towards Lee Hyesun. And he opened his mouth.

Status window.

[Lee Hyeseon]

Cooking Level:3

Baking Level:0

Tasting Level:4

Decoration Level:2

Those were pretty sad stats. But, Jo Minjoon remembered that almost all of Lee Hye seon's cooking did not taste that great. If her skills were that low, that explained why.

“..... Skill Window.”

He mumbled to see if it would pop up, and the more detailed screen indeed opened up. Knife skill, heat controlling skill, understanding of Traditional Korean cuisine, etc. But of those many skills, two particularly caught Jo Min Joon’s attention.

[Understanding of Italian Cuisine] – Mastery 23%

When preparing Pasta, Pizza, Dolce Soup, and other Italian dishes his understanding of cooking would increase.

When preparing Italian dishes, probability of failure decreased.

Although the chances were low, it was possible to make a dish that was above the current cooking level.

[The chef’s experimental attitude]

Chef’s experimental attitude is added to the recipe when trying new dishes.

When attempting a new dish, low chances of unlocking new recipes.

He didn’t complain about his Mastery of Italian cuisine. It seemed that whenever he studied or made italian dishes, his proficiency would rise, and he wasn’t quite sure yet but there seemed to be a system that compensated for his dish.

He also understood why he didn’t have mastery in the Chef’s

experimental attitude. That is for one's attitude, and it would be weirder if someone could master an attitude. But the description was a bit vague. Low chance of unlocking a new recipe. Does that mean that it opens up like the status and skill window? Or does it mean that it pops up in his head? And the word new dish was vague also. Does it mean completely new dish that no one has thought of before, or a dish that Jo Minjoon has never made before.

‘I'll find out when I try.’

Jo Min Joon smiled. He was only a 30 year old newbie chef with practically no experience. 23 Year old. It wasn't very young, but it wasn't too late to challenge the road of cooking. Even thirty wasn't even too late. He was just in a rush, that was all.

But the first obstacle he would face was his parents. His career as a teacher was set after his graduation, so it would be difficult to get their permission. Jo Minjoon thought carefully and came up with a plan. The first step was to show his parents that his cooking skills were pretty good.

That moment what he thought of was a TV program's name. Grand Chef Korea.

(...) He liked it so much to the point he didn't miss a single season. If he were to participate in that program, although he wouldn't be able to win, if at least he could get a good grade his parents would still recognize him to a degree. However....

‘Was that program still running?’

It started broadcasting on England and the United States and then came to Korea. Jo Minjoon unlocked his cellphone and searched for Grand Chef. Of course, there were no news in Korea. Maybe they would make a contract at the end of this year and start broadcasting the next one.

“That program won’t do”

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and continued to search. He searched for cooking competitions in Korea but there were no properly organized ones. Even if he were to participate in a competition it wasn’t sure he would be the one to win. The strength he had now, wasn’t an absolute one. Eventually he would have to polish his cooking skills.

The results of searching for hours on the internet, the conclusion Jo Minjoon came to was to participate in an international tournament.

He didn’t have confidence in winning, but he did have confidence in reaching the finals. Because it wasn’t that he did not have that much ability to walk the chef path.

Maybe if his parents had a more positive view on cooking, but they only viewed it as a 3D occupation. It wasn’t the moment where cooking mania blew everywhere, so to change that, Jo Minjoon had to show them that he had the capability to cook. And Jo Minjoon believed that to change that was to get a good grade at the competition.

However there were no worthy competitions in Korea he could participate in. The ones that had some degree of recognition were all Korean based food themes, and there were also team based competitions. So he didn't have any option but to look for international ones.

So the only option he had left, was one.

“.....Grand Chef.”

Not Grand Chef Korea, but only Grand Chef. The Grand Chef that opens in the United States. Maybe it would be better to refer to it as a program rather than a competition. The important thing is that Grand Chef is a competition for amateurs. And there was no other competition for amateurs that attracted as much as Grand Chef.

Not only in the US, Australia was also getting application forms, but to Jo Minjoon, the United States was more eye catching. If he had the same conditions he thought that instead of going to Australia it would be better to go to the United States. He didn't have any problem talking in english. At one point he was also an english teacher. If he couldn't hold a conversation wouldn't that be embarrassing?

“There is only one problem.”

Parents. If it were travel fees he had some savings before going to serve in the army. However if he were to tell his parents that he



was going to the US to participate in a cooking competition it was obvious they were going to refuse. Was it that he had to tell them that it was only travelling? He was starting to get upset.

Before reincarnating, when he resigned as a high school teacher, his parents were so angry they wanted to refrain him from doing so. However they couldn't stop his stubbornness. He only left them a scar, so he didn't want that to happen in this life.

“Ha... can't be done.”

I have to hide it from them. That was the most peaceful road. While thinking about those things, he was searching on the internet plane tickets to the United States. He heard someone pressing the password at the entrance of his house(TL: Most of korean houses come with electronic keys). Jo Minjoon turned off the screen and went to the living room. He thought it would be his father, but the one who came in was his younger sister Jo Ara. Her school uniform revealed her skinny dark tanned body.

“Mom i'm home~. Oh, oppa was home too.”

He felt a surge of mixed emotions looking at her sister wearing her uniform. It was proof he time travelled to the past. Lee Hyeseon walked towards Jo Ara and said.

“Hey Ara, come here and try this. Your oppa made it.”

“Huh? This?”

Lee Hyeseon gave Jo Ara the souffle she begged her son to make some more. Jo Ara uneasily held her spoon and gave it a bite. She yelled with her eyes round.

“Delicious! It can’t be. How could oppa make something like this?”

“Right? I was also surprised after tasting it”

“Oppa be honest. It’s some of those instantaneous food right?”

Jo Minjoon instead of replying tched his tongue and said to his mom.

“Mom. If you are tired maybe i should prepare dinner”

“You? You are going to make dinner?”

Lee Hyeseon looked at Jo Minjoon as if things like this could happen. And right now, it looked like Jo Minjoon was having fun cooking and tried this and that, but it didn’t look like he was ready to prepare for dinner. But he did not only cook, it also tasted great so she couldn’t help but to find it to be unexpected.

However she couldn’t refuse if he was volunteering to prepare the bothersome dinner for her, so she nodded and said.

“Okay. Try preparing dinner. Let’s try some of my son’s cooking.”

“.....is that okay, mom? Can you trust oppa’s cooking skills?”

“This girl... Look at the bread you ate. It looks like your oppa has some aptitude in cooking.”

“ That’s right but.....”

Jo Ara looked with uncertainty at Jo Minjoon.

“Oppa do you really have confidence in cooking?”

Jo Minjoon let out a grin and whispered to Jo Ara.

“Won’t it be tastier than mom’s cooking?”

## Chapter 3: Back To 7 Years Ago (3)

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“.....That’s right.”

Jo Ara just nodded without thinking it twice. Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but finding it amusing. To think that their mother’s cooking was rated so low by her children.

However even if you took it for granted that Lee Hye Seon cooked well, Jo Minjoon was confident in surpassing her. Jo Minjoon was almost at the top of the amateurs. His cooking skills weren’t ones to be inferior to an ordinary housewife.

“Ara. What do you want to eat ? Choose something.”

“I need to have options to choose.”

“Why, you know. You can choose from western cooking, or soups. If not you can also choose noodles.

“ Hmm.....”

Jo Ara started to think. From usually seeing her oppa that only stared at the ceiling to suddenly start acting like a chef. That was really amusing. So she thought of something that seemed the hardest to prepare. Suddenly a thought came to her head. That chinese food was really hard to make. Jo Ara let a malicious grin and said:

[“Champong!”](#) (짬뽕)

“.....What?”

“Make me some Champong. Champong. Why? Can’t do it?”

Jo Minjoon found it outrageous. He could clearly see the intentions of Jo Ara so he didn’t even get angry. Jo Minjoon said.

“I’ll make it”

“.....What?”

“That I’ll make it”

Jo Minjoon immediately went to the cutting board. He didn’t particularly have chinese noodles, but he thought that instead he could make some flat rice noodles. For seafood he had some clams, but he didn’t have time to clean them. It was almost six. And to properly clean the clams it took at least three hours.

“Ara. Go to the fridge over there and look if there’s some pork meat.

“Okay.”

Maybe she was sorry for asking him to make dinner, but Jo Ara moved however Jo Minjoon asked her to. After looking for some time on the fridge she came with a lump of pork meat.

“Here.”

[Chuch Beef]

Freshness: 87%

Origin: Korea, hoengseong

Quality: High

“It’s chuch beef.”

Personally it was the part of the pork he liked the most. The taste of the lard compared to [Samgyeopsal](#)(삼겹살) or Moksalsal(목살, neck meat?) was really deep. The feeling you got when you chewed was also really different. Jo Minjoon thought for a while. “Can I make it to suit with the Champong soup?” He thought it was going to be okay. Only, if the meat was grounded. In case it was not grounded, the feeling the chuch beef gived would play differently with the noodles.

Jo Minjoon took a polished and sharp knife from the knife holder. And immediately started to cut the beef to ground it later. The part where Jo Minjoon took more emphasis on while cooking was the use of the knife. Ordinary people might think that only making the shape of holding the knife was enough, but depending on how you dealt with the knife the final result of the cooking would vary greatly.

Even if the edge of the knife was less sharp or if you failed to control your strength while slicing the meat it could end up like a



torn rag. But of course if you dedicated and put your all to it even a little kid could do it easily. Of course they wouldn't be as fast as Jo Minjoon. Jo Ara watched with eyes of admiration and said.

“When did you improving your knife skills?”

“Why are you making a fuss over only this?”

Jo Minjoon grinned. To say the truth, the time he improved the most on his knife skills was when he just entered a restaurant as the youngest. He didn't know how many onions and garlicks he had to chop and slice. He thought that those days were quite painful, but thinking about it he thought that those moments were necessary. However he didn't think of repeating those times. Ever.

After slicing the meat, he also trimmed the green onions and the garlicks he had by the side. After crushing the garlicks with the side of the knife he sliced it. As for the green onions he sliced them longly. Jo Ara was looking at this sight with her mouth wide open. He was already fast while slicing the meat, but now it surpassed that. The skill he showed while dealing with the green onions and the garlic wasn't normal. It could be said that it was something you could only watch in TV.

“Mom! Oppa handles the knife really well!”

“Okay~.”

Jo Ara raised her voice and yelled, but Lee Hye Seon replied as if it was annoying. Even if he was good at it how good could he be? Jo Ara was frustrated, but she didn't keep bothering Lee Hye Seon.

Anyways the slicing was nearly over.

Jo Minjoon spread the cooking oil on the wok. And when it was sufficiently hot he put in the garlic and the green onions. When the wet vegetables met the fire it made frying noises. The sound made him happier. Sometimes some of the oil got to him, but that was unavoidable.

Besides the wok, he started to boil some water. Instead of pouring cold water on the already stir-fried ingredients it was better to pour already hot water.

The aroma the green onions and the garlic gave, tickled his nose. When the garlic started to turn brownish, Jo Minjoon put the chuch beef over it. The pork oil and the cooking oil mixed and got sucked by the ventilator. The chuch beef got roasted and turned yellowish.

And that was the moment to put some pepper powder. Jo Minjoon didn't waste a single minute and put on the pepper powder and the oyster sauce. It was the next moment after that. Jo Minjoon grabbed a handful of dried cabbage leaves. Jo Ara that was observing next to him said with a freaked expression.

“Everything's okay, but is it alright to put that dried cabbage leaves? It isn't even potato soup.”

“I think it should be okay.”

“What’s with that answer.”

He couldn’t answer that it was going to be okay. It was something he hadn’t tried yet. However he thought that the aroma of the dried cabbage leaves was going to mix in well with the Champong. It gave the feeling he was going to present a kind of korean Champong. He thought of putting in some coriander, but Jo Ara didn’t like coriander much. And if by chance he did put some coriander it was going to get closer to thailandese cooking.

“Oppa, give me that portion of meat please.”

“.....Anyways.”

Jo Minjoon smiled and gave Jo Ara a spoonful of chuch beef. Jo Ara after tasting a bit laughed.

“I love meat.”

“Me too.”

Jo Minjoon nodded and also heated a portion of chuch beef. Mmm. You cook for tasting things like this.

“Instead of making Champong I think it’s gonna be okay to eat it fried?”

“It’s because you only ate a bite. If you keep eating it gets salty.”

“Mm. If you say it like that. Maybe you are right.”

Even if you put in soup it was salty, then how salty would it be if you ate it alone. Jo Minjoon checked the pot filled with water. The

water was boiling. Jo Minjoon lifted the pot and slowly poured the soup to the wok. It made a 'chaa' sound similar to the one when you put off fire. Soon the aroma of the green onion and the pepper powder spread.

“.....Unexpectedly i think it is going to be delicious.”

“Later don't ask me to make you some.”

Jo Minjoon put the boiling wok behind, took the onion and went to the cutting board. He sliced the tap, and sliced horizontally following the texture. Slicing one onion seemed to take at least 10 seconds. Jo Ara couldn't help but feel confused and feel admiration.

“Oppa is it not that you study english in university but instead go to cooking school?”

“It's a compliment right?”

“No..... It's too sudden. That you cook well? My oppa? Like this?”

The confused feelings were transmitted by her voice. Jo Minjoon didn't respond and smiled. Saying the truth he thought it to be pointless to answer. Did he practice alone? What time would he have on a house that he lived with everyone. He could only change subjects.

“Enough. Bring me some cabbage.”

Jo Ara still confused, didn't reply but still obeyed. Jo Minjoon

followed the texture and sliced it perpendicularly. If it was too big not only didn't go in in the mouth but it also took a while to chew all the food. First he put the cabbage from one to two minutes. After that he also put the rice noodles.

If you boiled the noodles with soup, the noodles would lose oxygen and get harder but that could also help on strengthening the flavor. Personally Jo Minjoon preferred pouring the soup on the already cooked noodles. Because he liked simple flavors. But there was a reason he didn't do that right now.

‘Bothersome.’

To put the soup and the noodles took two or three times the effort. And it was not that the difference in flavors was that different. It was only a matter of preferences. If that was the case he didn't have any reason to trouble himself. Also, aside of it being too bothersome, rice noodles didn't mix well with soup. So he expected that boiling them at the same time would give it more flavor.

Jo Minjoon silently prevented the noodles from getting sticky and continued to boil. While he was doing that, before Jo Minjoon appeared an alarm that wasn't as surprising as before.

[Chuch beef Champong]

Freshness: 94%

Origin: Too many ingredients to find out

Quality: High

Cooking points: 5/10

## Chapter 4: Back To 7 Years Ago (4)

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The cooking score was only 5. However the 6 points lemon souffle was good enough to be sold. He thought that if he got a 5 it would be rather good to eat. He served the Champong with both expectation and disappointment of the 5 points dish.

“Ah, dad needs to be here too.”

It was Jo Ara mumbling with disappointment. They said that if you talked about a tiger behind its back it would come (Korean tale. Similar to speak of the devil). The sound of the door opening could be heard as Jo Su Yeob came in. When that person came in, he smelled something and said.

“What’s this smell? Did you order Champong?”

“No. Oppa made it. Dad, come quickly.”

Jo Ara brought Jo Su Yeob by the hand as if she was proud that her brother had made it. Jo Su Yeob let a laugh looking at the prepared Champong.

“Jo Minjoon made this?”

“I just made it because i was bored.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and set the chopsticks. Jo Su Yeob sat

on the chair with a puzzled expression. He didn't believe that the dish in front of him was made by Jo Minjoon.

Lee Hye Seon said while walking towards the table.

“Before he also made some sort of cake. What was that? Su....”

“Souffle. Lemon souffle.”

“Yeah that. I had to leave some for you. But there was just too little. Later ask Jo Minjoon for some.”

“If you say it like that, then I'll get interested.”

Jo Minjoon clasped his hands.

“Okay for now eat. The noodles are going to get cold.”

“Right. Lets.”

Jo Su Yeob closed his eyes and held his hands together. It was a christian house so it was normal to pray before eating. Jo Minjoon also held his hands and offered his prayer.

‘Make it so it is surprisingly delicious.’

Of course even if he tried his best it was still a 5 point dish.



However the happiness of a chef was listening compliments of his dish being delicious.

As if everyone accorded beforehand, they lifted their chopsticks almost at the same time and grabbed some noodles. An almost transparent flat rice noodle. At first glance it looked like it was linguine noodles. Champong pasta. At that moment's thought, Jo Minjoon let out a laugh. There was a moment where that unimaginable combination was really popular.

When put in the mouth, the first thing felt was the spicy pepper oil flavor. And above that the salty and sweet flavor, and the special aroma the pork beef left. It was delicious. It was good to the point it could be comparable to a town's chinese food store Champong.

When Jo Minjoon looked the expression of his family he thought it would be the same for all of them. The chopsticks that held the noodles didn't seem to stop, Jo Su Yeob was even drinking all the soup. In the first place there wasn't even a need to look around. Before Jo Minjoon, an alarm appeared.

[The clients that ate the chuch beef Champong are satisfied!]

To call them clients. It came out of nowhere but it still felt good to hear. Jo Minjoon laughed and said.

“It's delicious right?”

“.....No joke. I think there is going to be no need to call another chinese food store.”

“Even so, i think the flavors a little different? There’s no seafood, and it lacks of spiciness.”

To say the truth, to make it spicier wasn’t a big problem. It was a generation where there existed sauces to make the hot flavor. There was no need to ignorantly make it hotter using fire. If you heated sugar with cooking oil it was enough to give the hot flavor. It seemed like a fraud, but it was a useful solution.

However making Champong took too much of your time. Compared to how hard it was to make it, instead of suffering at house, it was better to order it elsewhere. With that in mind Jo Minjoon showed that he wasn’t confident on purpose. Jo Su Yeob said.

“Is there anymore? Dad ate it all.”

“There is. Please wait.”

Jo Minjoon brought the wok and served the Champong. Jo Su Yeob said while laughing.

“Can it be that he cooks better than you? Our Minjoon.”

“.....Anyways. Didn’t you say last time that my cooking was the best?”

“Nah..... Sincerely not. Your cooking is salty or flavorless. It’s one or the other. There’s no middle. Middle.”

Jo Su Yeob laughed as if he was teasing her. Lee Hye Seon was angry but she couldn’t reply back. She didn’t have a hobby on cooking, nor did she have talent. At the saying that she was a bad cooker she didn’t specially have something to say against that. Lee Hye Seon instead picked on Ara.

“Ara. Stop eating. You are going to get fat.”

“What? Don’t want to. In a little more i’m going to be a senior. Legally, it’s the age where girls can get fat!”

“But you don’t even study. Stop eating. Do you know how fat Champong makes you?”

“Enough. I’m not even the type to get fat. Take care of yourself. Don’t you know that you are getting fat?”

Jo Minjoon just sighed.

“The preliminaries are on March.....”

Jo Minjoon just looked at the screen. It was the preliminaries test of Grand Chef. Anyways, he couldn’t even apply for the first semester’s inscription as the time he was discharged from military

services overlapped. There was no reason he couldn't go even if it was March.

Jo Minjoon completed the application form briefly and sent it by email. If the tournament was only for Americans he would see no hope, but fortunately it wasn't like that. Now the problem was the expenses. The plane ticket and the living expenses. If it was a month he could somehow withstand. But if by chance he passed to the finals...

"If you were picked as one of the hundred chefs, would living expenses be provided?"

Now that he thought about it, it made sense that you would be provided with living expenses when people from all over the country were gathered in one place. Of course, that was only if you got to the finals. You would have to take care of yourself in the preliminaries.

As he saw a little bit of hope about the expenses, he rested at ease.

'Now I just have to say that I will be travelling.'

He was quite uncomfortable about lying, but thinking about it, it was not a lie. At least he would be travelling. Only that the purpose of the travel was a little different from what he was going to tell them.

He felt bitter about it but there was nothing he could do. Jo

Minjoon looked sharply at the screen.

“Even if i’m not able to win....”

No.

“Let’s win. I must win.”

He couldn’t keep thinking that losing was unavoidable. Jo  
Minjoon’s gaze grew sharper.

# Chapter 5: In 92nd Street In New York (1)

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“Grand Chef season 3 winner... Kaya Lotus.”

Jo Minjoon wrote down what he remembered on his notebook. The season that opened on 2010 was the third one. Although he didn't watch all the episodes, he did watch all the important parts. Like who was the winner, what abilities did she have. And in this season, she was also the chef Jo Minjoon respected the most.

Maybe she was the most talented one on Grand Chef. Also she was the most popular winner. I think she deserved that. She was white, 18 years old, pretty looking, and british accent. And on top of that the trademark that she was from a poor family made her the perfect cinderella.

Just like what you would expect of someone from a poor family, her mouth was foul and she liked to curse, but there wasn't a single time when the judges didn't praise her dish. You wouldn't believe it if they told you that her dish was made without receiving any education. Even in Korea the name of 'Kaya Lotus' rose to the top of search engines...

“Will I be able to beat her?”

I don't need any background. Grand chef wasn't an audition that picked singers or actors. It was a chefs war where the food on the stage decided the winner. Cooking was everything that determined the winner. However.

Kaya Lotus was like a bottomless pit. Honestly it was to the point that he didn't even want her to participate on season 3. She was a monster that an amateur couldn't hope to beat.

“My weapons are knowledge and the system. Her's is talent....”

Jo Minjoon didn't know it all, but he remembered what kind of competition it was. There were some pieces of memory he couldn't remember, but he would be able to when the time came. Also in the case of tasting missions for example, you had to guess the ingredients of the crepe and Jo Minjoon had confidence in guessing all of them without getting any mistakes. It was the strength of the system.

Even if he was shown a dish and asked to make something identical, he could do it. Because he could know the recipe of the dish he tasted. Accurately speaking, he could only guess the dishes which tasting level was inferior to his cooking level.

And now Jo Minjoon's levels were like this.

[Jo Minjoon]

Cooking level: 5

Bakery level: 4

Tasting level: 7

Decoration level: 4

After reincarnating, the only thing that changed was that the tasting level went up by one. It was the results of trying to feel the

tastes one by one when he tried food. But certainly, after that, whenever he tried food he felt it funnier and felt a deeper taste. The flavor of an ingredient, he could feel it more precisely with the tip of his tongue, and also seemed to get a deeper understanding on the ingredients.

“I need to raise my cooking level.”

Jo Minjoon mumbled with a disappointed voice. The results of Jo Minjoon roaming around, the chefs of the restaurants that seemed okay to eat were on average from 4 to 5 points. That meant that Jo Minjoon's skills were just like that. Of course, for an amateur that was quite good, but it was insufficient.

He wanted to win. He didn't want to be another ordinary chef, but someone that could make food better than anyone else. Also Grand Chef was the first stepping stone for that.

He grew curious. What could be the level of Kaya Lotus?

Airport. In front of security check. Lee Hye Seon let out a sigh.

“Ugh. Saying that you are going to the United States.”

“I'm sorry for going alone. Let's go together next time, mom.”

“Who's telling you something for going alone. No, I'm right for rebuking you. To go alone to that dangerous place....”



Lee Hye Seon seemed to look at the United States as a country of firearms, gangs and drugs. Saying the truth it was partially right. Even if it was a developed country there were a lot of crimes. That was the United States. Jo Minjoon said.

“Even so, New York is a city so it won’t be as dangerous.”

“Do crimes in Korea only occur in the provinces ?”

Jo Minjoon smiled at what his mom said and replied.

“But New York is protected by Spider Man.”

“Gosh.”

Lee Hye Seon laughed as if she was flabbergasted. Jo Minjoon hugged Lee Hye Seon for a moment. It was really just a moment. Jo Minjoon saw the soon shocked face of Lee Hye Seon and said.

“I’ll be back.”

“.....Call when you get there.”

“Yes.”

After getting past the security check and the passport control, Jo Minjoon went to the gate of his plane. It was of course economy. His finances weren't abundant as to get on business class.

[Greetings, dear passengers. We give you our sincerest thanks for travelling with our Mokdong airlines number 127.....]

In the middle of the announcement, the plane was taking off to the skies. To arrive at New York you needed 24 hours. If you bought the ticket that went directly to New York it would be only 14 hours, but just to get 10 hours earlier to spend 300.000 won more (\*around 260 dollars) on a plane ticket, it was something he couldn't afford. Jo Minjoon's 10 hours weren't as valuable as those 300 thousand won. At least, he thought like that.

“Grand Chef. I believe in only you.”

Don't let it be 10 hours wasted but 10 minutes worth 300 thousand won.

The time on the plane was really boring. There were times where they gave you in flight food, but it was only 4 to 5 points food. It was already incredible that it got that score when the food was prepared beforehand and reheated with the oven. However, after completing his tasting training and putting good food on his mouth, the quality dropped considerably.

And now, Jo Minjoon was tasting the fourth in flight meal.

[Red [Jambalaya](#)]

Freshness: 76%

Origin: (There are too many ingredients to figure out)

Quality: High

Cooking Points: 6/10

To say the truth it was satisfactory. If something like this that was reheated on the oven, it made you wonder how good must it taste when fresh. It was a dish that would make many chefs to question that.

Jambalaya was an only kind of dish that was eaten on the southern parts of the United States as fried rice. Also it was normally called Red Jambalaya when you put in some tomato sauce or slices of tomato to make the Jambalaya have a red colour. It was as soft as a risotto and had a deep flavor. The muddy feeling similar to fried rice, was the perfect touch.

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes and tried to feel the tastes of the Jambalaya one by one. Of course, right now he was thinking up of the recipe of the Jambalaya, but he was trying his best not to borrow the system's strength and figure it out just with his strength. The sausage on his mouth produced the [Maillard Reaction](#) and a sweet aroma could be felt. Simply said it was well roasted.

Normal Jambalaya's recipes started with frying meat in an oily pan. On top of that you fried onions, garlic, celery, etc. After that you boiled mushrooms, scallions, and different spices. The most important part here was the spices. Normally you used tabasco

sauce, but there was a whole world of differences on the jambalaya depending on what sauce you used or what herbs you put on.

“I honestly don’t know about..... tabasco. What herbs did they use? Is it saffron? It’s a bit weak to be saffron..... Maybe lime?”

Jo Minjoon checked the systems window. And smiled brightly. There was definitely some lime in it. Besides that there was the sweet and sour flavor of the sauce.

The recipe was also exactly as Jo Minjoon thought it to be. After boiling lime juice and tabasco sauce, you cooked the seafood and after that put some rice and chicken gravy. And you just had to wait for the rice to be cooked and it was done.

Jo Minjoon could feel his heart beating and pressed the part that said tabasco sauce. However he couldn’t help but sigh at the message he saw.

[As the tasting level is low you are unable to view and analyze the recipe.]

Although the Jambalaya’s recipe was already analyzed, you couldn’t do it with the tabasco sauce. Well, that meant that the tabasco sauce was that good and was able to get a 6 on cooking points in an in flight meal. He was disappointed but at the same time was curious about who was the owner of this recipe and felt some adoration for him.

When he saw his surroundings there seemed to be no one who tried Jambalaya to dislike it. Certainly it was a dish that everyone liked. When he realised that simple truth, a corner of his heart seemed to fill with admiration.

After finishing his last meal like that, he was on New York's La Guardia airport. February 26th. New York's climate didn't seem that different to Seoul. When inhaled some air the blood vessels on your nose constricted, and because of that Jo Minjoon unconsciously started to breath from his mouth.

“Ah, it's rather cold.”

After getting on the bus setting out of the airport, a road with beautiful houses appeared after getting through a path of leafless trees. They were mostly houses made of red bricks. By the emotions you couldn't get on Korea, Jo Minjoon let an awkward laugh. It was somewhat embarrassing. He didn't know what he was embarrassed of, but he was. Maybe he was proud of having achieved something. Jo Minjoon got off the road. It was a place he didn't even know the name, but he decided to roam and find a place to stay.

At that time Jo Minjoon saw a poorly dressed man with an absent minded expression. Jo Minjoon approached the man and took out his wallet. And he gave him a 5 dollar bill. He stared at Jo Minjoon dazed. Maybe it was because of the unexpected approach.

When Jo Minjoon was about to say something a kid came running to him at full speed. He bumped Jo Minjoon and kept running. He fell sloppily on the floor on his butt and Jo Minjoon frowned his brows and looked at the boy getting farther away.

“What was that.....?”

Why did they shove people and didn't even apologize? Maybe that was the character of New Yorkers? It was at that moment when he tried to complain. Jo Minjoon's expression got rock hard. It wasn't there. That thing that was in his hands just some moments ago, disappeared as if it rised to the skies.

“My wallet!”

## Chapter 6: In 92nd Street In New York (2)

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He tried to follow the pickpocket with all of his strength, but there was no way to catch a local of the place. The pickpocket moved from alley to alley and soon disappeared from his sight.

“What the fuck.....”

Jo Minjoon looked around without any strength. It never happened before in Korea, but it wasn't even an hour and he became a victim of pickpocket. ‘When I was warned to be careful of the pickpockets, would I be one of those victims?’ He thought like that. I was absent minded.

‘I didn't hold New York in much regard’

He was at a loss for words. He didn't have much cash but all of his cards were on the wallet. He couldn't even take a cab properly.

Jo Minjoon went back to the place he got robbed without strength. The beggar that was seated on the floor said with a smile.

“Do you need this?”

While he was saying that, on the beggars fingers was the 5 dollar bill Jo Minjoon gave him. Jo Minjoon let a out sigh and answered. It was quite a while since he interacted with a foreign man but it was pretty fluent.

“It’s okay. It’s pettier to give and take. Get something to eat with that.”

“Do I look like a beggar?”

It didn’t look like he was asking because he was uncomfortable. He asked as if he was really curious. Jo Minjoon scanned the blond man around his forties. An old coat and a tattered scarf. To look at it as a vintage fashion. His clothes seemed too humble. He was seated on the floor and also, the hat was placed as if he was begging for money so he seemed the more humbler.

“Are you not?”

“I also have a house.”

“.....At least you aren’t homeless. The 5 dollars. Can you give it back?”

“Didn’t you just say so. That giving and then taking is the pettiest. As I got it being treated as a beggar, I’m taking those 5 dollars as the cost of it.”

The man was saying that while having a big smile, so Jo Minjoon didn’t particularly have anything to say to him. In the first place, there was nothing he could do with 5 dollars.

Jo Minjoon sighed and sat besides the man. The man opened his mouth.

“I’m Lucas Dean. What’s your name?”

“Jo Minjoon. First name Jo and name is Minjoon.”



“Korea? Japan?”

“It’s Korea.”

Lucas glanced at the travelling bag Jo Minjoon had and said.

“It looks like you came to sightsee, but you got it all ruined from the start.”

“.....Can’t do anything about it. Except to be on the streets.”

He couldn’t call home saying that as soon as he got to the US he got pickpocketed. In fact, his mother was really worried before he left...

“Did it become roaming?”

Jo Minjoon took out his cellphone. He prepared it beforehand, but fortunately the internet worked just fine. After reporting the loss of his cards, he was wondering whether to call the police or not. Lucas told Jo Minjoon.

“The police won’t even care about pickpockets. It’s a minor matter. Even more if you are a foreigner.”

“.....It’s a scary place.”

“Do you have somewhere to go?”

Jo Minjoon shook his head. Looking at Jo Minjoon, Lucas smiled and asked.

“Would you be willing to stay in a beggar’s house?”

Lucas’s house wasn’t even 20m away from where he was. He went inside the house made of red bricks and opened his mouth.

“For it to be a beggar’s house, it is quite splendid.”

“Stop with the beggar this and beggar that. It makes me sad listening to you.”

“.....Thank you.”

“Oh, please. Don’t thank me like that.

The house of the supposed beggar was quite good. The ceiling was high and the floor was made of marble. Was it a 230 yard house? If he combined the second floor’s rooms, then it would be even bigger.

It was at that moment when Lucas came in. On the living room, a golden haired woman was looking at Lucas with a shocked expression.

“Lucas..... Is that really you?”

“.....Jane. I’m sorry.”

The woman’s face who was called Jane was surprisingly pale. She was walking wobbly, so Jo Minjoon thought that she was going to fall. And in the end she didn’t. Maybe if Lucas didn’t quickly hold her, the hard marble floor would have.

“Jane!”

“Ah, I can touch you. It really is you.”

“.....I’m sorry for coming back late.”

Looking at the conversation going between the two Jo Minjoon didn’t know where to look and looked dejectedly. Only then did Jane seemed to notice Jo Minjoon. It looked like she had many things to say, but she couldn’t do so in front of a man she just met.

“And this person.....?”

“Oh, he’s someone who helped me. Greet him. He’s called Minjoon.”

“Oh, nice to meet you. I’m Jane Dean.”

“I’m Jo Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon shook hands slightly with Jane and looked at Lucas. Someone who helped him? What was with that? The only thing Jo Minjoon did for him was to give him 5 dollars. But looking at this house he didn’t seem like someone who needed those 5 dollars.

He was curious but didn’t feel like the right time to ask him that. Jane’s eyes were moist, and Lucas’s eyes were also red. There seemed to be something he didn’t know about. Was Lucas a runaway? If he guessed at the age it was something that couldn’t possibly happen, but he couldn’t help but think so looking at his clothes.

Lucas opened his mouth.

“He lost his wallet because of me. It’s going to be a while but I

want him to stay at our house. Is that going to be okay, Jane?”

“Of course. It feels just like a dream that you have come back. Jessie will be happy too.”

At the name of Jessie, Lucas’s face got dark.

“Will Jessie forgive me?”

“.....Think about those things later. There are many things I want to ask you, but first let me ask you this.”

Lucas looked at Jane. Jane looked at Lucas with eyes that seemed to smile.

“Did you eat?”

While Jane was preparing to cooking, Jo Minjoon was being escorted to his room by Lucas. There was a room on the second floor. Jo Minjoon asked cautiously.

“Can I ask you what happened?”

“.....I ran away. I wandered for quite a while, and returned just now. It’s thanks to you.”

“I didn’t understand before and I still don’t. What is it that I helped you with?”

Lucas showed him the 5 dollar bill. Jo Minjoon let an awkward laugh.

“You didn’t even use the money.”

“To receive good will from someone was like a trigger for me. I also looked around, felt guilty, and thought that I had to start again.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t argue at what he said. How many things would have passed his mind for the bill I gave him? So he couldn’t guess wildly. There were many things he was curious with, but it was quite difficult to ask it all to Lucas right now. Jo Minjoon chose to alleviate the mood.

“It’s a 5 dollar hotel.”

“You can checkout whenever you want.”

Lucas laughed while saying that.

It was soon past 5 o’clock. Jo Minjoon unpacked his luggage and went to the kitchen. It hadn’t even been a while but the cooking was almost done. It was mac and cheese, hamburger steak, and salad. Jo Minjoon, that at least wanted to help, said with an awkward face.

“The smell is really nice. It seems that your cooking skills are really good.”

“My husband is quite the epicurean. So to not hear his naggings, I can only practice.”

Jane said that and let out a light laugh. Lucas who was next to her said with a bitter expression.

“I believe that good food makes both the people who, make it and the people who eat it, happy. I still believe that. However....”

Lucas was about to say something but he refrained from doing so. Jo Minjoon peeked to the direction where Jane was. The unique feeling and the aroma the mac and cheese gave thrust to his nose. It was a smell that made him expect the cooking points.

“You will be happy. Good food makes you happy at least three times a day.”

“It’s twice. I only eat twice a day.”

“Then you will have to make to effort to eat three times.”

Of course if you thought about the calories american food had, maybe eating twice was healthier than otherwise.

The mac and cheese was soon finished and being served on the table. Jane put the hamburger steak on the plate and asked while setting.

“Do you put eggs on the hamburger?”

“No. I like it without eggs.”

“Good. We also eat it without eggs in our house.”

Jane laughed and sat on her seat. Jo Minjoon looked at the dishes with his eyes sparkling.

[Hamburger Steak]

Freshness: 97%

Origin: (Too many ingredients to figure out)

Quality: High (Average ingredient)

Cooking point: 6/10

[Mac and Cheese]

Freshness: 89%

Origin: (Too many ingredients to figure out)

Quality: Medium High (Average ingredient)

Cooking point: 6/10

Not surprisingly both of the dishes were 6 points. If it's 6 points it is comparable to a restaurant. At least, what Jo Minjoon experienced was like that. If even that wasn't it, it was like a weekly event dish from a really well out town restaurant. It was hard for normal people to get this result.

Jo Minjoon held his hands for a while and offered his prayer. Lucas said while looking at him.

“Are you catholic?”

“No. I'm protestant.”

“Too bad. We are catholic.”

“Dear. First eat your meal.”

“Okay.”

Lucas grabbed his fork. Jo Minjoon also grabbed his. Where Jo Minjoon's hands first went to was the hamburger steak. To say the truth he didn't really like hamburger steak. Precisely speaking he didn't like minced meat dishes. However the aroma this hamburger steak gave was really strong.

It was when Jo Minjoon took a bite of the hamburger steak. It seemed as if only beef was used, not pork, and the aroma was stronger than the average hamburger steak. He also sensed the aroma of pepper and on the sauce he felt an acid taste. What is this sauce? Even when he put all of his concentration on the tongue he couldn't think of anything. It wasn't a flavor he knew. Jo Minjoon turned his head to the recipe window. He was curious about the sauce's identity.

[Hamburger steak ingredients]

Beef, onions, eggs, bread powder, salt, herbs, pepper powder, brown sauce (A1 sauce)

‘Oh, so this is brown sauce.’

Brown sauce was developed on Britain. It was a sauce made with jujuba, vinegar or sugar on tomato paste, but what made it sweeter was called HP sauce, and what made it sourer was the A1 sauce. It was a sauce that wasn't used much in Korea.

Precisely speaking the flavor of the hamburger steak wasn't so familiar. The flavor of the meat was strong, and the flavor was also strong. If it was on Korea maybe it would be a failed dish. However what appeared before him was a 6 point dish. If that was the case it



meant that it was a well prepared dish. It could be that it was an american flavor that he was so strange to him.

Jo Minjoon tried to approach cooking with the point of view of an american. Anyways Grand Chef was a party of americans. If he didn't understand american dishes there was no way he could win. Jo Minjoon tried to comprehend the taste of the hamburger. He suppressed the strong aroma the hamburger gave and tried his best to comprehend the complicated flavor.

At first he couldn't do it well. However, one bite. Two bites. The more he ate the more he comprehended. It was at that moment. Before Jo Minjoon appeared an alarm window.

[You ate a hamburger steak on your home.]

[Location bonus! Your attitude on approaching your tasting made the proficiency of the skill 'comprehension of american cooking' to rise!]

[As your field of view on cooking broadens your cooking level goes up!]

## Chapter 7: In 92nd Street In New York (3)

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The first thing Jo Minjoon felt wasn't surprise or happiness. He was annoyed. He was concentrating on the food, and didn't want to get distracted by the alarm.

“Does it suit your tastes?”

“At first it wasn't familiar. But as I ate I was able to enjoy it more. It's the first dish i have eaten in the US.”

“Then when someone mentions you the US the first thing you will remember will be my cooking. It's an honor.”

Jane said that and laughed. Jo Minjoon, after smiling back at her, concentrated again on the food. What was used on the meat? It didn't look like something so ordinary as salt. On the ingredients window the herbs and the salt were separated, however he wondered if herb salt was used. The saltiness and the aroma of the herbs were so excessive they seemed to be mixed. When he felt that subtle difference, he didn't know why but felt joyful. He felt like his tongue was trained.

[You noticed that the salt and the herbs were mixed together and discovered the herb salt.]

[Your delicacy experience increases.]

When the alarm window appeared he could once again affirm it. You could sense the flavor more clearly after tasting it. The herb salt's unique flavor seemed to touch his heart. Jo Minjoon savored the hot meat juices in his mouth slowly. And at the same time he quickly read the recipe.

It was more ordinary than he thought. You mixed fried onions, beaten eggs, bread powder and minced beef. The point that minced beef was used was different from the normally used hamburger steak from Korea. It wasn't chopped meat but minced meat so while chewing you could feel the meat more shallowly, and at the same time the beef juices felt more abundant.

Even the point that it didn't use pork meat was different. In Korea you mixed the chopped pork meat with beef on a 1-1 ratio. So the softness of pork meat had the tendency to sustain the strong flavor of the beef, but on this hamburger there was no pork. Maybe it was because of that, that he felt more unfamiliar.

After that, the next steps on the recipe were quite ordinary. You fried the hamburger steak on an oiled pan, you put on some pepper on the brown sauce and put it on the hamburger. For a dish that didn't have any secret preparation to get 6 points, maybe it meant that it was an essentially basic dish.

After eating half of the hamburger steak, Jo Minjoon moved his fork to the mac and cheese.

He didn't know what would be the final flavour if he ate two dishes that were strongly seasoned, so he purposefully ate the least seasoned hamburger steak first.

Honestly speaking mac and cheese wasn't a dish Jo Minjoon liked. He didn't like strongly seasoned dishes, precisely speaking he didn't like dishes that made him feel pressured. He preferred simple flavors instead of complicated ones, and a simple sauce or only salt instead of sauce mixed with various ingredients.

Because of that Jo Minjoon felt that the mac and cheese that on top of that was added salt to be too strong. Wasn't it on the level that you couldn't finish melting cheese so you had to boil it down. And on top of that it was added milk, so sincerely it wasn't an easy dish.

Precisely speaking mac and cheese was called macaroni and cheese. To explain it simply you cooked butter, cheese and milk with macaroni until it boiled down. It was like an American topokki(korean spicy soft rice cake). Only that instead of the spiciness it was greasy.

However, when he opened his mouth to eat a bite, it didn't feel as greasy. The flavor was also different from the one he tasted in Korea. It was slightly spicy and also a refreshing aroma could be felt. Jo Minjoon with a hint of admiration opened his mouth.

“This mac and cheese is really delicious. It's the best from those I have tried.”

“It's one of Jane's own dish. Our daughter really loves it.”

Lucas said and put on a smile. The recipe alarm popped up, but Jo Minjoon kept to analyzing the flavors on his head. But he couldn't help but frown at the aroma of pepper. Because there wasn't even a single black powder in it.

“.....Is there maybe white pepper on it?”

“Yes. You are right. Your sense of taste is really sharp. Normally, people don't even notice.”

Of course. If you could taste pepper but see none, then that meant that it contained white pepper.

White pepper was made by steaming the black skin of the pepper and grating the white stones. It's aroma was weaker than normal pepper, but it was commonly used cooking white coloured dishes. Jo Minjoon laughed and said as if he had won a quiz contest.

“Because i'm planning to become a chef.”

“Oh.... So did you come here to try some dishes?”

“That's one of my purpose, but i want to participate in a competition. Grand Chef.”

“I know that. I have seen it quite a few times on tv.”

The conversation stopped for a while. Jo Minjoon put some mac and cheese in his mouth and started to relish the flavour. He didn't feel rejection towards the aroma of cheese that flowed through the tip of his tongue and the top of the inside of his mouth. The spicy taste seemed to be mustard. The herbs aroma that came along with the cheese was quite familiar. Parsley. However he was quite confused with the sour flavour, and it wasn't even vinegar.

At the end Jo Minjoon admitted defeat. Jo Minjoon opened the recipe window before him and enlarged the ingredients section.

[Mac and cheese ingredients]

Macaroni, cheddar, cheese, butter, flour, milk, worcestershire sauce, dijon mustard, parsley, white pepper.

Worcestershire sauce. For koreans it was better known as uster

sauce. Only then did Jo Minjoon get to know of the identity of the sauce. This sauce was made by boiling onions, carrots, celery, etc. had a sour and salty flavor. And for Korean people, it had a really exotic aroma, but it seemed that he couldn't feel it because it was hidden under the mac and cheese's aroma.

He didn't know if the recipe was an ordinary one. Because it was something he didn't normally make. Even if he were to make it, he wouldn't use the main recipe but would guess and put some milk, cheese and would watch tutorials. The roux made by frying butter and flour was an ingredient that if put moderately on the mac and cheese it would make the cheese stretchy.

The recipe was simple. After boiling the macaroni, you mixed milk with the roux and made it long, and on top of that you put worcester sauce, dijon mustard and spices. The next step was to put cheese, and after that was the turn of the macaroni. At first glance it would seem complicated, but in reality it wasn't that hard to make.

“Did you make the worcester sauce personally?”

“Yes. The commercial one was a bit lacking in flavor.”

“I couldn't even think that I would be able to feel a deep flavor like this one on a mac and cheese. Originally I.....”

It was when Jo Minjoon tried to continue what he was saying. He heard someone closing the door of the entrance. At that moment Lucas's face became stiff as if he were nervous.

Jo Minjoon looked at the entrance. A golden haired student was

coming into the house. She seemed to be a middle or high school student, but it was difficult to know beyond that.

Because it was difficult to determine a white person's age by sight. Her round blue eyes were opened really big and were staring at Lucas.

“What..... is this?”

“Jessie. Wait, let's talk with mom.”

“I'm asking you! What is that person doing here!”

Jessie's eyes were twitching. Jo Minjoon was drawn in another's family fight, so he could only be seated nervously. He felt that his stomach was going to get upset.

“Jessie. Sit down first. Have your meal.....”

“I don't want it! I'm not eating!”

“What are you doing in front of a guest? It can't be done. Jessie. Go upstairs to your room!”

Jane yelled sternly. Jessie glared at Lucas disappointedly. Lucas could just look at Jessie with regret. Jessie bit her lips.

“I'm always the bad one.”

With that, the discussion ended. Jessie went upstairs stomping. A banging sound of the door could be heard and at the same time it became quiet on the kitchen. Lucas said with a sigh.

“I'm sorry. I got you involved in vain.”

“It’s okay. You don’t have to apologize.”

Jo Minjoon said that and waved his hands. Jane went upstairs saying that she will have a conversation with Jessie, and only Lucas and Jo Minjoon remained in the kitchen. Jo Minjoon let a silent sigh.

‘Mac and cheese. It’s not an atmosphere in which I can eat more.’

But it’s delicious.

...

Really delicious.



## Chapter 8: In 92nd Street In New York (4)

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On that night after dinner, Lucas told his story bitterly to Jo Minjoon. It was really honest to tell to someone he had just met, but maybe it was easier to do so as they were only related for a day.

Lucas said he was the CEO of a jelly factory. When you heard the word factory it was easy to imagine a low quality food, however Lucas was someone who tried his best to get away of that prejudice. And his efforts returned as a rather good sale.

The downfall of a factory that was doing well happened on a morning. An american program that seeked safety targeted Lucas's factory. They went to the broadcast with a jelly that contained soil, something that could never happen in a refining process, and claimed that it was a jelly from Lucas's factory. Also that made up broadcast got popular as it got more than 10% of rating.

Lucas immediately sued the broadcast, however, as the trial took really long the factory was already in a state of downfall. It was Lucas's dream to manage a jelly factory since he was small. However they say that since then he has lost all of his will. That's why he became a vagabond and roamed from here to there.

He spent almost three months as a vagabond. After those three months he came back to the 92nd street, but Lucas didn't have the courage to get inside his house. At that time, it was Jo Minjoon who gave him those 5 dollars. When Jo Minjoon was holding the 5 dollar bill, there were many things Lucas was thinking in his head. The embarrassment of his shabby form to the point people treated him as a beggar, and a strange feeling he got when he was given the

5 dollars. It was a complicated feeling, but thanks to that Lucas could return to his house.

However.

“Jessie won’t forgive me.”

Lucas mumbled bitterly. Jane went upstairs to soothe Jessie, the results were the noises of Jessie crying and Jane’s pissed voice. Lucas sighed and said.

“I’m sorry. To bring a guest to this mess.”

“.....A small child will be like that. When you stop feeling sorry, you will be able to go back to before.”

“I wonder.... Would I be able to do that? I left everything behind and left. I had a kid and a wife. I could only think of my sufferings. I’m a bad father.”

“No father in the world can be a perfect superman.”

Listening to that, Lucas replied while smiling.

“But all the children wish their father was superman.”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t reply back. Lucas’s mood was really down to try to console him.

The conversation ended there. Lucas walked sloppily to his bedroom, and Jo Minjoon went to his assigned room. His head was

a mess. Lucas's problem was also his problem, and this house's problem. Of course it wasn't a problem he could intervene in because he thought that it was a sensitive family problem.

The problem was the schedule he had after. First, he had to go downtown. He had to get reissuance of his lost card, and needed a proper place to stay that wasn't Lucas's house.

“.....Should I ask if they can get me there.”

There wasn't anything harder than to say something he would regret. It was even more in a situation like this family. It was when Jo Minjoon was sighing and was covering himself with the blanket. It could be heard that the next room's door was opening with a creak. The next room was Jessie's room. Where could she be going at this night? Maybe she is running away?

At the moment's worry, Jo Minjoon opened the door quietly and went out. Jessie was walking sneakily almost to the point that nothing could be heard. And the steps those feet were directed to was the kitchen. Looking at Jessie eating the cold mac and cheese, Jo Minjoon let a sigh inwardly. Right. She's at the age she should be hungry. If she didn't eat dinner, then even more so.

Jo Minjoon hesitated a moment and went downstairs. Jessie was startled and stared at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly and her eyes were filled with wariness.

“Hello.”

“.....What is it?”

“Are you hungry? Should I make you someth.... Oh, it’s not my kitchen.”

He couldn’t just use another person’s kitchen. However Jessie could so Jo Minjoon said.

“After pouring some water, put some vinegar and boil it again. Then it will be edible.”

“... ..”

Jessie didn’t reply but she did as Jo Minjoon told her to. She poured water and vinegar in a pot and put it on fire. The vinegar would save the macaronis elasticity at least a little. Of course there was some sour flavor left so it was best to pour just a little.

After sloppily resuscitating the macaronis, Jessie started to eat her late meal without any words. Jo Minjoon just stared at Jessie. In the end Jessie opened her mouth first.

“Why are you looking like that?”

“Your father. I heard the story.”

“.....I’m just trying to leave it like that so stop it.”

Jessie replied with a mean voice. It was a rebellious attitude but he didn’t mind. Still, his body was one which had lived as a teacher 2 years ago. He was rather accustomed to dealing with an adolescent going through puberty. He shook his head.

“I’m not thinking of lecturing you. Just to congratulate you.”

“Congratulate on what?”

“That your father came back. Don’t you think it’s a reason to celebrate?”

Jessie didn’t reply. Her long eyelashes, characteristic of white people, pointed down. He could tell with that. That she didn’t hold a grudge against her father unlike what she was showing. Rather she was quite longing for him.

“I’m leaving soon.”

“What does that mean.”

“That you can tell me everything without being embarrassed. That your father came back, honestly you are happy. You have to be happy. If you want to eat something but can’t you keep remembering it. It’s the same.”

“.....do then.”

“What?”

“What should I do then.”

Her words were mixed with crying sounds. Jessie was biting her lips. It seemed like she didn’t want to show her weak side. Jessie continued talking while crying.

“Whenever I see Dad I get angry. In the past, he was proud and cool. Why did that kind of person... Why did he get so small? Why did he get that miserable?”

“.....It’s not that he got small. Your father aged to the point you can see his small back.”

How many fathers with broad backs were on the world. Every father is afraid of his back not being big enough in front of his children, but it couldn't be helped for that day to come. Except he got healthy enough for his age, the children will end up knowing that their father's back is small. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"I said that I won't lecture you so instead I will ask you a question. Do you want to hug the small back of your dad or do you want to stop looking at it?"

"It's not that I don't want to look at it."

"So it means that you want to hug him."

Jo Minjoon smiled after saying that. Jessie turned her head with her eyes flushed. It was a good idea. At least, she was a kid that didn't know how to hate her parents. It was precisely that she was that kind of kid, that after all that revolt she ended in her room which was in the 2nd floor. If she was a kid that wasn't fond of her parents then she would have immediately ran away from her house. Jo Minjoon undisturbed, opened his mouth.

"I will cheer for you, do you want to do it?"

".....So how?"

Jo Minjoon replied.

"With the things your dad loves the most."

For example jelly.

## Chapter 9: In 92nd Street In New York (5)

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“Jelly?”

Jessie asked once more. It wasn't because she didn't know what jelly was. But because it was an idea that has never crossed her mind. Jessie, of course knew that Lucas liked Jelly. But i wasn't that her father had raised a factory just for that reason.

However she never thought of making some jelly and giving it to him as a present. She thought that it was just like making some pizza and gifting it to the pizza store owner. However, now that she thought about it, the situation was different compared to this circumstance. The jelly factory disappeared and the jelly that Lucas liked so much wasn't near him anymore.

If she were to make some jelly to the current Lucas.... Jessie lifted her head and looked at Jo Minjoon while thinking like that. The deep blue eyes with double eyelids were staring at Jo Minjoon. For those eyes, Jo Minjoon was like a weird person. For a person she had just met, to request her to make some jelly for her father. That kind of weird person.

But she seemed to trust him. Although she didn't know why. Maybe that weirdness made him more trustable. Jessie opened her mouth.

“.....But I don't know how to make it.”

“It's okay. I do.”

Saying the truth he didn't know too well as to say it that confidently. However Jo Minjoon thought that making the jelly was more important and the flavor was only secondary. Just the fact that Jessie made the jelly, was enough of a meaning.

Jo Minjoon, while thinking like that, realized something. Even if it was the same dish the food on the dish could become a completely different thing depending on who cooked it.

‘What kind of mind should I keep while cooking?’

Suddenly that question popped in his head, but it was not the right moment to be speculating. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. This house's kitchen was Jane's area, but for now Jane should understand him. Granted that Jane didn't understand him and cursed him because of that, it was a completely different matter. Whatever the result was, the most important thing was to fix the relationship of parent-child. It was that thinking.

“For now can you bring some fruit? If you don't have any some juice is also okay.”

“I think there's some apple. But it shouldn't be ripe.”

“Then it's better. When making jelly, the less ripe a fruit, the more delicious it becomes.”

“Oh.....”

Jessie nodded and brought the apples. And she also brought some sugar. She didn't have gelatin but it didn't matter. Jo Minjoon knew of a way to replace it.



“Didn’t you make jelly when you were young?”

“I did. But instead of making it I liked to eat it more.”

“It’s okay. If you make something you like to eat, it is meant to become more delicious.”

Jo Minjoon said that and smiled brightly. Jessie glanced at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“Mister, are you a chef?”

“No. I aspire to become one”

“Are you sure you make it well?”

“Why. Are you worried that it’s not tasty?”

Jessie didn’t reply and kept her mouth shut. Jo Minjoon handed over the knife while looking at Jessie. Looking at the puzzled Jessie, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Divide the apple in 4 and carve the seed. After that split it in four and don’t peel it off.”

“Why the skin?”

“Because there’s pectin on the skin. That will do instead of the gelatin.”

Inside the skin, and the pulp below that were the most important pectin ingredient for making jelly.

“You can do it right?”

“..... This much is easy.”

Jessie talked as if telling him to refrain disregarding her, and lifted the knife. However her handling of the knife was quite sloppy. While holding the apple with a hand, and the other for holding the apple, when she tried to slice it, the knife got stuck after it went all the way to the middle. Even so Jessie didn't try to press the back of the knife with her other hand. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“You should press the back of the knife with your hand. Yes. Like that.”

Even after Jessie finished with slicing the apples Jo Minjoon didn't make a move. After all there was no meaning if Jo Minjoon made it. Jessie had to make it by herself. For her father. And because of herself.

“Now put it on the kettle and pour some water until the top of the apples get slightly out of the water. And put the fire on low.”

“Are you really going to make me do it all?”

“Do you want me to help you?”

“.....Fine. I'll do it. I will.”

Jessie poured the water accordingly. To say the truth, this was the part where most of the beginners made mistakes. In reality even Jo Minjoon made them. After pouring a lot of water, the next thing he planned to do was to boil it down until the moisture evaporated. However, when put lots of water the fruits turned bad.

So depending on how she regulated the water decided if the jelly was a success or a failure.

Jo Minjoon just stared still at the kettle that subtly started to boil.

“Now what do I do?”

“After waiting for a while more, when you think the apples are turning soft start to squash them. But first let’s prepare all the other processes. Can you bring me a cotton cloth and a bowl?”

“Okay.”

Jessie, as if she gave up, obeyed. After leaving the cotton cloth and the bowl by a side of the table, Jessie and Jo Minjoon stared at the kettle in silence. The first one to speak was Jo Minjoon.

“High School?”

“No. I become a high schooler the next year. And mister?”

“It’s not mister but MinJoon. I’m a college student. After thinking about it we didn’t even present ourselves properly”

“.....Jessie Dean. Where does mister come from? Japan?”

“Where do you think I come from?”

“Hmm. China, if not Korea. Japanese people aren’t as calm minded as mister.”

Jo Minjoon nodded while grasping an image of japanese children. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I’m korean. And I’m travelling.”

“I don’t know why people like New York so much. It’s a city that doesn’t have many things to see.”

“It’s like you don’t know the value of something you usually have by your side.”

It wasn’t something he said with only New York in mind. Jessie also understood the meaning under Jo Minjoon’s words. She spoke with a calmer voice.

“I want you to know that it’s not that I’m forgiving dad.”

“There’s no need to. But can’t you try to understand? All the dreams he pursued for crumbled in an instant. On that situation not every father can become a superman.”

Jessie nodded at what Jo Minjoon said and shut her mouth. After a while of not opening her mouth, she barely opened it and spoke.

“Even so, every daughter wish their father to be a superman.”

She was right. Jo Minjoon lifted the spoon he had by his side and covered her eyes. And while making round motions he said.

“Even super men have times they want to hide. If you saw spiderman you would understand.”

Jessie laughed and looked bitterly at the floor. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Enough of this superman talk, now slowly stir the insides of the kettle. The apple should be soft. As for the pulps, squash it with the ladle.”

“Okay.”

Compared to the first time, her voice was softer. Jessie, after taking off the lid of the kettle, started to stir with the ladle. The bubbling sounds and the sweet aroma that could be felt, the unique fresh aroma was similar to paste.

When the pulp was almost done squashing, Jo Minjoon covered the bowl with the wet cotton cloth. And said.

“Pour the things inside the kettle on the bowl, slowly.”

Jessie tilted the kettle. From the kettle's bird flowed the squashed pulps and the fruit juices. Those things started to gather on top of the cotton cloth. It was then. Jessie grabbed the cotton cloth and tried to squeeze it. Jo Minjoon hurriedly raised his voice.

“No!”

“Ye, Yes? Why?”

“If you do that then the pulp gets through the cotton cloth and the mixture loses oxygen. Just let the pulp to flow like this.”

“....Mmm. It's going to take a while.”

“You need patience to cook jelly.”

In the end Jessie let out a sigh and had to wait for the pulp to naturally flow out of the cotton cloth. After that, everything ran smoothly. After showering the pulp with sugar on a 4-3 ratio and mixing it, you stirred it while boiling. You had to boil roughly until the jelly slipped off the spoon.

Then you had to cool it down after putting it in a vessel. After finishing all of those processes it was roughly past 1am. Jessie stretched while having sleepy eyes. Jo Minjoon smiled and said.

“How is it? To cook for someone else.”

“I don’t know. It feels as if i just achieved something. And unexpectedly relieves the stress.”

“Congratulations. On giving your first step.”

What kind of step was it? Understanding your father? Or starting to cook?

She was curious but she couldn’t ask. If she asked something like that then she would be treated like a kid that didn’t even know about hidden meanings. And somehow Jessie didn’t want to be treated like a kid.

The morning was bright. The sunlight that leaked through the iron fences melted the snow piled on it. Lucas opened his eyes slowly. The first thing he saw was his wife’s nape. He felt a warm feeling looking at that familiar yet unfamiliar sight. However, at the same time when he remembered the angry look Jessie gave him, the smile on Lucas’s face immediately disappeared.

He couldn't help but let out a sigh. He didn't know how to ease the anger of his daughter. He couldn't think of any answers. Lucas left his bedroom without strength.

He wanted to regain some strength with drinking a glass of water, but he saw something strange when he opened the fridge. Next to the water bottle was a big paper bowl. The thing that was wrapped with wrapping paper was definitely jelly. And handmade jelly on top of that.

“It's apple jelly.”

“Jessie.....!”

Jessie looked at Lucas with her swollen eyes. Could it be that her daughter really made jelly because of him? Lucas was getting confused thinking about that, so Jessie said bluntly.

“First eat it. It was hard making it at dawn.”

“Ri.., right.”

Lucas ate some jelly after swelling his eyes a little. It was a bit lacking, but for it to be homemade was definitely good jelly. And in the first place, quality wasn't even that important. He couldn't even feel the flavor of the jelly properly.

“Delicious. It's delicious.”

“.....Fine then.”

It was that moment when Jessie tried to give her back. Lucas hugged her. Jessie didn't push Lucas back. Lucas was fighting back his tears and opened his mouth, but no sound could be heard from his mouth. It only had a sobbing feeling. Jessie too, rolled her teary eyes but she pretended to be calm.

Jo Minjoon while looking at that sight, turned his back. He wanted to keep that moment for the two of them. However what he encountered was Jane's teary eyes. Jo Minjoon said with an awkward face.

"I'm sorry. I used your kitchen without permission."

".....It's okay. Thank you for helping my child on making the most delicious dish in this kitchen."

Jo Minjoon turned his back with a smile on what Jane had just said. In his eyes appeared the cooking score of the jelly. However Jo Minjoon didn't look at that score. He had no need to.

Because that jelly didn't have the need to be judged with points. Jo Minjoon replied back unperturbed.

"It's one of the greatest dishes I have seen in my life."



# Chapter 10: Grand Chef Preliminaries, And... (1)

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Jo Minjoon was told to bid his farewell because he was going to leave Jessie very soon, but even after having received the reissuance of his card Jo Minjoon continued to stay on Lucas's house. It wasn't that he didn't want to. However Lucas didn't let Jo Minjoon go, and even Jane didn't let him. At first, he wanted to decline and find somewhere else to say, But Jane's one sentence made Jo Minjoon stay.

“Be the bridge that let's Jessie cross over to her father.”

How could someone keep saying that they will leave when they are told that. Jessie too, grunted as if she didn't like the idea, it was as if she didn't dislike having Jo Minjoon stay.

15 days passed like that. On the preliminaries morning. Lucas's house. Jo Minjoon was standing in front of the cutting board and was staring blankly. Or at least it looked like that in the outside. However, Jo Minjoon was looking on the window in front of him.

[The estimated cooking score is 5.]

It was a new function acquired after his level went up to 6. A cooking simulation on what you wanted to make. It was a system that, when you thought of a recipe in your head, it predicted the final score of that recipe.

It had various uses. No, saying that it was useful was not enough. If he followed the recipe there would be no way to fail the cooking. To say the truth, it was a strength that could shine more brightly on a competition like master chef. There were countless participants that got disqualified on the stage where you designed your dish. If there were no errors on your designing, it meant that the cooking success probability got higher.

‘Also I’ll be able to save ingredient fees’

If his cooking skills went up by a bit you got something like perception. While cooking, you could know the flavor of a dish even without tasting the seasoning. So when trying new dishes, the probability of failing also got lower. But it was only making it not disgusting. The foremost recipe that brought out the best taste. Someone who could estimate the very best recipe at their first time wasn’t an ordinary person. People who could do that were divided in two.

Masters and geniuses.

Jo Minjoon was neither a master nor a genius. However he could borrow those skills with restrictions. Of course he didn’t possess shocking and artistic skills like them but.....

‘Hard work will compensate for it.’

Jo Minjoon believed that. Talent wasn’t all in cooking. Of course, talent could help you progress faster, but the height it could reach was similar to hard work. The rest was a difference of the individual.

While helping Jessie with making jelly, Jo Minjoon thought about a lot of things. What Jessie prepared wasn't simple jelly. It was filled with reproach and cheeriness for his dad. And that jelly became the most valuable thing because of those qualities.

A thought crossed over his mind. That what chefs put on their dish wasn't simply cooking. So what did they have to put? Hope for eating it simply? That was just a formality.

While immersed in his thoughts, he continued thinking but he couldn't come up with an answer. However Jo Minjoon didn't become anxious. Just like he said to Jessie sometime, cooking was a battle with oneself.

“Let's cook first.”

Jo Minjoon accorded with Lucas that he would be the one to prepare all of the meals instead of freelancing. To say the truth, it was consideration for each of them. For Jane it was consideration for letting Jo Minjoon into her kitchen because of his situation. As for Jo Minjoon, he could hone his cooking skills and save some money like he would.

For the past 15 days Jo Minjoon prepared the meals without missing a single one. It was mainly american dishes. From the jambalaya he ate on the plane, to Jane's mac and cheese and hamburger steak. Also he tried things he didn't know about and things he did.

Even if it was a Korean meal, if he made it with American ingredients, the flavor changed. Even rice was like that. The rice that was eaten in Korea was of a japonica (Japanese) breed, so its stickiness and aroma were really strong. And the rice eaten in America was from the indica breed. 70% of the rice was indica's.

And the remaining 30% was called calrose and had the characteristics of both indica and japonica. The stickiness was moderately mixed, and the aroma too. And what Jo Minjoon handled the most these times was calrose rice.

Even calrose's cooking method was in the middle of japonica and indica. You poured more water than indica but less than japonica. So even handling these minor ingredients had its own differences. The most important thing was understanding American ingredients.

Jo Minjoon was confident. For the past 15 days he came in contact with all kinds of ingredients. It wasn't that he had mastered all of them, but the theory was mostly in his head. He believed that somehow, he would be able to overcome it.

"I should at least pass the preliminaries."

I need to stick to it. I want to stick with it. With that meaning.

"Should I make cheese risotto for breakfast?"

I will stick like the risotto, as it is sticky and gooey.

“.....Idiot, to get an upset stomach after working hard to make it.”

Inside the car on it's way to the preliminaries. Jessie said while looking at Jo Minjoon pathetically. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh while looking exhausted.

“Cheese doesn't suit with me.....”

It wasn't that he hated cheese, but every time he ate it his stomach got upset. So he couldn't help liking it. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes feeling the inside of his stomach. If he got motion sickness while looking out of the window, it was going to be really painful. Lucas, that was on the driver's seat grabbing the handle, said worriedly.

“Is it hard for you? Will you be able to take the test?”

“Ah, it's okay. It's my stomach that hurts not my hands.”

“Whew.... For now, straighten your body. I'm starting to feel sorry for you.”

Jo Minjoon just laughed while looking at Lucas's regretful face.

On the preliminaries, there were at least a thousand people. New York's applicants, and the tests were divided by intervals of an hour but still there was this much people. Of course, there were many friends and family who came to cheer, but still....

“Wow, after the preliminaries just a few get through the next stage right?”

“Yeah, kinda. Each week, at most five people get chosen....”

If he put it like that, even if he passed through the preliminaries it was a great thing. Jo Minjoon got nervous while looking at his surroundings. There were many cameramen wandering and interviewing the participants. Right. This wasn't an ordinary cooking competition. It was Grand Chef.

Grand Chef's procedures were really simple. First, the preliminaries were held every weekend in the US. The first stage was interviewing. That detail was a little different, but normally it tested the comprehension towards ingredients.

While they were like that, people came in and out after 5 minutes of interviewing from the room. Precisely speaking, the maximum was 5 minutes. People who came out after just a minute were common and their expressions weren't good. It looked like they were sent away after just a few exchange of words.

‘It seems like I just have to hold for 5 minutes.’

To put it with another words, he had to point out at least a little of his comprehension towards cooking while talking for 5 minutes.

“Number 591! Participant 591!”

“I'm here.”

“Go in.”

The staff sent the orders briefly. Jo Minjoon nodded and went to the interviewing room.

On the interviewing room there were three people whose faces were familiar. Only then could Jo Minjoon feel that he was on the same scene from Grand Chef he watched from TV. Even before he became thirty he received a Michelin two star, and before getting on his forties he was expected to get a three star. That was Alan Craig. He was recognised as the best epicurean of all Europe, and at the same time, the heiress of the potter beer, Emily Potter. Finally, he owned various restaurants all over the world, and he didn't have a book that didn't receive a Michelin. That was Joseph Vincent.

From those three, the one who had the most prestige was of course Joseph. It wasn't that the other two had miserable careers, but Joseph's career was simply on another level. Maybe it was because of that. Jo Minjoon felt a peculiar aura emanating from Joseph. Joseph opened his mouth.

“Minjoon. Looking at your application, you came all the way here from Korea?”

“Yes. That's right.”

“What's the reason you bothered on coming to this faraway land?”

Evidently, he thought that it was a question that he had to overcome. Jo Minjoon tried his best to speak unperturbedly. However it couldn't be helped that there was a trace of

nervousness in his voice.

“Since small, I dreamed of becoming a chef. So right after I got admitted to college, that dream became more earnest. I thought that I couldn’t keep delaying. So i wanted my parents to acknowledge me as a chef..... For that, Grand Chef was the best stage available to me.”

“I wonder. There are many chefs believing that they would debut splendidly, but instead they disqualify and get cursed.”

“Let’s hope I don’t become like that.”

Jo Minjoon replied calmly. Looking at that Jo Minjoon, Joseph was secretly amused. Jo Minjoon talked slowly and had a heavy voice that could make the people listening to it, to pay even more attention. His looks were also quite charming for western people. However that wasn’t the case in Asia. He was viewed as someone who could become a star, at least for the exterior. Just the story that he came from Korea to become a star had quite the impression.

‘But it was only if he had the skills.’

Expecting didn’t come late even after the interviewing test was over. Joseph sent a look to the nearby Alan and Emily. Emily opened her mouth.

“Let’s start with some basic common sense.”

“Yes.”

“Tell the difference between cutting an onion vertically and



horizontally.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly

# Chapter 11: Grand Chef Preliminaries, And...

## (2)

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It was a really basic question. However it could judge whether or not you had real cooking experience.

The onion was basically a vegetable that had a texture. If you cut it vertically that texture would be followed, however the texture would die if you cut it horizontally. And an onion which texture died, compared to one that was alive, was softer and it felt less spicy.

Jo Minjoon answered simply to that question. Emily nodded.

“That’s right. Then the next question. When you cut bell pepper, do you slice it from the outside? Or from the inside?”

“From the inside.”

The part where people made the most mistakes when handling pepper was on this one. You chose to slice it from the outside because it looked easier, but in this case not only did the bell pepper not slice well, but the cells also got destroyed and the nutrients flowed out from the juices. Cutting from the inside was easier and could conserve the nutrients better.

“Fine. Then I’ll ask a similar question as before. What’s the difference when you slice bell pepper horizontally and vertically?”

“If you slice it vertically, the nutrients get comparatively destroyed. The taste is closer from a natural pepper, but it’s

difficult to keep the unique aroma of the pepper. If you slice it horizontally, the pepper gets harder, however you can feel the aroma clearer.”

Even after that, he kept answering similar questions. The difference of low and high heat cooking. When making a dough, what were the differences when using different kinds of flour. They even asked the characteristics and harmony of the ingredient when you combined spices and condiments.

And after all that, the one who opened his mouth was Alan, who was silent. He opened his mouth conservatively while keeping a blunt face.

“You passed the interview. Minjoon, prepare your signature menu. I’ll give you 30 minutes.”

“Yes. I understand.”

There was no congratulations. Nor cheers. It was obvious. This was only giving the first step. It was on the level where they let you hold a pan and a knife.

Jo Minjoon bent his head lightly and left the interviewing room. And he went towards the countertops. It was as if he heard the news of having passed, the cameraman came to him and opened his mouth.

“Congratulations. What kind of dish are you planning to make?”

“Roasted bream with pepper sauce.”

“Are you confident on being able to satisfy the judges standards?”

“7 points. I’ll make it.”

The cameraman couldn’t help but feel puzzled at the unexpected words of 7 points. He wouldn’t know if it was 10 points, but for it to be 7 points. Was it that he was expressing that he wasn’t confident? However Jo Minjoon’s face that was thinking like that wasn’t the slightest bit dark.

There was a reason Jo Minjoon talked briefly like that. Every broadcasts were the same, but on auditions, as if it happened all the time, was a character the audience shared in common. He didn’t want to talk long, fearing that he was going to get cut and edited from the video.

With exception of basic ingredients like garlic or onion, you had to bring the main ingredient in an icebox. Jo Minjoon walked towards where the Dean family was waiting. Lucas gave him the icebox and said.

“There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who can give flavor and those who can’t. You are the former. I believe you will get good results.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon received the icebox as he smiled. The cameraman captured the moment when Jo Minjoon was with Lucas, no, the Dean family. Even at first glance, it was evident that they weren’t family. So what relation could they have? Of course, there was still

no need to get curious. Jo Minjoon getting out in the broadcast was entirely up to the judges. Precisely speaking, it depended on how much fun factor was contained on the process. Jo Minjoon's background was worth knowing when it became an issue.

Jo Minjoon went towards the counter. At the end of the table was a camera installed, and on each counter was a cameraman in charge. It was a bit awkward to cook as usual, but Jo Minjoon didn't mind. In the first place, he wasn't the type to mind other people glances.

Jo Minjoon took out the ingredients from the icebox. Bream. And saffron. These were the ingredients Jo Minjoon prepared. And for the rest, he just had to pick from the provided ingredients by Grand Chef.

The system became helpful on cases like this. Because he could know the quality without touching or doing anything of the sort. So each time Jo Minjoon stretched his hand, he grabbed a top quality ingredient.

And the ingredients he grabbed easily were simple. Pepper, garlic, scallions, thyme, basil, olive oil, grape seeds oil, butter, salt, white wine, and bell peppers.

What Jo Minjoon tried to make right now was a dish that he had made several times, and perhaps more than a hundred times. The bream that was roasted using the arroser technique, and the spicy yet sweet pepper sauce. Also it was one of the dishes Jo Minjoon was the most confident at.

First of all, what Jo Minjoon handled first, was the bell pepper. After Jo Minjoon turned on the fire, he put the bell pepper above it. And he poured cooking oil moderately on a frying pan.

After that he trimmed the scallions. The skills which he sliced the white roots weren't ordinary. Even Jo Minjoon got surprised. Was it because his cooking level went up that his knife skills got more proficient?

He didn't have the leisure to be daydreaming. Jo Minjoon threw the sliced scallions in the hot oil. The nice aroma of the scallions expanded with the frying sound. Jo Minjoon turned his sight from the scallions and looked at the pepper. The side of the pepper that got in contact with fire was burnt black, but Jo Minjoon's face was rather calm. It was that like he had wanted to burn it in the first place. If you burnt scallions, pepper or paprika, the smoked flavor stuck to it and the original aroma intensified.

The scallions got well fried after just a minute because it was thinly sliced. Jo Minjoon took out the scallions and put it on a kitchen towel. He needed to take off the oil. Anyways, the scallions were going to be used as decorations after the dish was completed. He had plenty of time.

Suddenly, the pepper got all of its sides burnt. Jo Minjoon peeled the burnt pepper while

cleaning it with cold water. If you cooked pepper this way, its flavor became deeper than when you cooked with another method.

However that wasn't the end. Jo Minjoon wiped the water on the pepper with the kitchen towel, and put the garlic, thyme, basil, grape seeds oil, salt and pepper in the bowl. After that, he started to grate it with a hand blender. This was going to be the sauce. A sauce that shines a delicate green. If you filtered it with a sieve and compressed it, it became pure. So it wasn't that he was going to make the bream outstand, but was going to cover it all.

As he finished the sauce, the last thing left was the bream. Jo Minjoon spread olive oil on the frying pan and turned on the fire. Then started to handle the bream. After sprinkling white wine as if applying, you put on some salt. Of course it was moderately. Because the seasoning was the sauce.

Jo Minjoon put the bream on the hot oil. After he felt that the skin was getting crunchy, Jo Minjoon flipped it around making the skin face upwards. And he put in a lump of butter.

The butter that melted instantly started to mix and concentrate with the olive oil and the fish's oil. Jo Minjoon tilted the frying pan a little and sprinkled the oil over the breams skin. \*Arroser technique(glossary). The technique was also called as basseting when using it to fry meat or fish.

If you kept sprinkling oil like this, the exterior got crunchy but the insides got moist.

When the bream was almost done, he still had 5 minutes left. Jo Minjoon slowly poured the pepper sauce on the plate. The sauce got larger as if brush painting, and on top of that was placed the bream. After that, placing the already fried scallions was the



finishing touch.

[You completed the bream with pepper sauce!]

[As you tried making a difficult dish, you are given an additional point!]

[Roasted bream with pepper sauce]

Freshness: 89%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to figure out)

Quality: High(Average ingredients)

Cooking points: 7/10

## Chapter 12: Grand Chef Preliminaries, And... (3)

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7 points. That was the best Jo Minjoon could get right now. It was a rather low score compared to 10 points, however Jo Minjoon felt by instinct. That whenever the score went up by 1, the difference would not be a mere point.

For the past 15 days, Jo Minjoon tried many restaurants of New York. Among them were two places that had received Michelin stars. One was a two star, and the other a one star. Both places were so famous that if you were a resident, you couldn't not know about it.

However there were 10 points dishes. They were mostly 8 points, and sometimes even a 7 points appeared. Also there was a 9 points dish which probabilities of appearing were lower than the 7 points.

Precisely speaking, Jo Minjoon ate only one 9 points dish. And that was on the two star restaurant 'East rabbit garden'. It was a restaurant that was soon expecting to get the third star.

And the 9 points dish he ate on that place was the best experience he couldn't compare to anything on his life. It was a perfectly roasted sheep ribs with curry sauce.

Jo Minjoon never thought that he would be shocked by a dish in his entire life. He did think that he would be shocked by a disgusting dish. However he never thought that a dish so delicious would even make your marrow shocked. But he was wrong.

Firstly, it was the unique harmonious aroma of the curry. When it flowed through the tongue and was getting through the nose, the sheep ribs followed back. When it was seared, I mean, when the exterior of the sheep ribs was well roasted, it possessed an aroma unique to the sheep ribs and invaded your mouth. For the aroma to invade the mouth and not the nose was a really miraculous and trance like feeling.

When he got a hold of himself, he couldn't enjoy the flavor properly and had already eaten all of the sheep ribs. At that moment, the shock Jo Minjoon got wasn't a normal one. How high the dimension of cooking could get, it was at that moment that he felt it clearly through his tongue.

That's why Jo Minjoon didn't frustrate himself over getting 7 points on his dish. In the first place, he thought that that was the ability he had right now. Perhaps it was the results of hard work. So it wasn't a score to be frustrated over, but a score to be thankful to.

Jo Minjoon loaded the cart with the plate that contained the bream and went to the room where the judges were. Because of many participants going in and out, the broadcasting place was filled with food scents.

Jo Minjoon looked at each of the judges. The first one he looked at was Emily Potter. Precisely speaking, it was at the window that appeared next to her.

[Emily Potter]

Cooking level: 3

Bakery level: 6

Delicacies level: 9

Decoration level: 6

It was a generally high level. He couldn't help but sigh in amazement at the delicacies level. If it was at that level, eating the same food could be felt entirely different.

Alan's delicacies level was also 9. Differently, Joseph's was only 8. Jo Minjoon thought that it was because of his age. If someone got through their forties, they would start to lose their sense of taste.

However, in the case of cooking, it was the contrary. Joseph's cooking level was 9, and Alan's was 8. Thinking of Joseph's age, it was understandable. He didn't know well, but he would be near his sixties. Because he had 10 years more experience than Alan, it couldn't be helped that his level was higher than his.

However at the same time, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but wonder. If someone of world class like Joseph didn't have a level 10 on cooking, then who did? No, in the first place, would that person even exist? It was at that moment when Alan Craig said with a blunt voice.

“Minjoon. How long are you going to make us look at your face?”

“Ah, I'm sorry.”

Jo Minjoon, after bowing a little, picked the plate that contained

the bream and went towards the table. Just as he left the bream on the table, the first to walk to the front was Alan. He had a slim and well built body. So just by looking at his looks you could tell that he was a perfectionist.

“Is it bream?”

“Yes. I cooked the bream with the arroser technique and put pepper sauce on it. The unique spiciness of the pepper will combine well with the bream’s flavorlessness.”

“We will know that when we eat it.”

Alan replied with a picky attitude. That didn’t particularly hurt Jo Minjoon. He could clearly know through the broadcasts that he was originally that kind of chef. Although he didn’t know if it was his real character or just a concept.

Alan ate the Bream after slicing it with a knife. Jo Minjoon silently looked at him. It was a 7 points dish. He already knew that he hadn’t failed. There was no need for him to get nervous. If you knew how to properly judge a dish, this bream was a dish that didn’t deserve any criticism.

While Jo Minjoon was still looking at Alan, Alan cleaned his mouth with a napkin and went back. There wasn’t any comments, but Jo Minjoon’s face was as calm. After that was Emily Potter. She brought the bream to her mouth with an expression of expectation. And after closing her eyes, started to savour it. Although she had a poker face, Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but think that there was a smile formed on her face.

The last was Joseph Vincent. He couldn't help but feel that from Joseph's wrinkly face, Jo Minjoon could sense the aura of a master. At that moment, he couldn't help but feel nervous. It wasn't because he was afraid that Joseph would evaluate his dish frivolously. Now he was going to try his dish. One of the top chefs was going to try his dish. Even before reincarnating he was peeling garlies on a restaurant that didn't even have a Michelin star. But now he was going to try his dish. Before Joseph tried it, he asked a question to Jo Minjoon.

“Do you think you cooked it well?”

“.....That dish is the utmost I can do right now.”

“Then if it is not delicious, means that you will have no future.”

Joseph said as if he was trying to scare him. However Jo Minjoon didn't back off. Jo Minjoon replied with a calm voice. To say that his voice had strength, it's tone was too low.

“It will be delicious.”

“Good. I hope that what you are saying is true.”

After Joseph said that, he ate the last bream whole. He savoured for a while, and after that, he smiled and went back to his place.

The three of the judges held a conversation. It was low to the point that Jo Minjoon couldn't hear it. The conversation didn't last long. After the judges nodded, they soon repositioned themselves. The first one to open his mouth was Alan.

“Minjoon. How do you think our evaluation will be?”

“I believe it’s going to be good.”

“On what basis?”

“If it was a failed dish, I wouldn’t have placed it on the plate in the first place.”

Alan smiled at what Jo Minjoon said and looked towards Emily. Emily continued the evaluation instead of Alan.

“Cooking the bream with the arroser technique was a really good selection. While I was chewing I could feel the aroma of the butter and the fish oil roam on my mouth”

“Thank you.”

“The pepper sauce was also good. Normally you would put paprika sauce on the bream, but the spiciness of the pepper pulls a more unique flavor. It isn’t hard to eat, but it tenses the mouth necessarily so the flavor of the bream can be felt more clearly. I ate it well. So you passed.”

Emily smiled brightly and finished her evaluation. Alan that was next to her nodded and looked at Jo Minjoon..

“My opinion is the same as Emily’s. Personally I think it was the most delicious from the fish varieties. The pepper sauce that is on your signature menu, shows a color that only you can make. If I had to point a thing that I was disappointed in, would be the plating. It was very minor key and a typical plating. A cooking that has creativity, over decoration with no creativity. I’m sad that it’s a bit disappointing.”

“Yes. Next time I’ll study more about plating.”

“Good. Then I’ll relieve myself and pass you. Your decoration wasn’t so good, but I’ll say it again. Your cooking is delicious. Minjoon. You know how to give flavor to the food. It’s good if you have confidence.”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon smoldered and felt that something in his chest rising. He felt that the frustrations and upsets he felt until now were eased by those words. Those were only words. But he was grateful and happy over those words.

Personally, he thought that those who shed tears on auditions were set up for the emotional parts. However, after coming to this place and listening to their compliments could Jo Minjoon, only then realise the meaning of the tears. It was as if his past life and passions were recognized. If those passions were real, he couldn’t help but shedding tears.

However Jo Minjoon didn’t cry. Even if those tears were real or not, to shed tears on a place like this was really seedy. He wanted to shed those tears when he was holding the winner’s trophy and holding the glory of Grand Chef.

Thankfully after Joseph opened his mouth, Jo Minjoon could relieve his feelings more easily. Joseph said with a soft tone.

“Minjoon. The first time you came here said that. That Grand Chef is going to be a nice stage. Now I can seem to agree with that. Grand Chef is a stage that exists for the sake of people like you. It’s your stage. I just hope that you can keep showing your skills in the



incoming stages. I ate well. It was a good cooking. Minjon.”

After Joseph took some air, he said with a smile on his face.

“You passed.”

## Chapter 13: Grand Chef Preliminaries, And... (4)

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When Jo Minjoon heard that, he unconsciously bowed. Only after bowing did he remember that it was a korean salute, but he didn't care. Even so, he wanted to express himself.

“You are one of the 100 to participate in the advanced rounds. Let's meet next time Minjoon.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon turned his back after replying while smiling. Alan was looking at Jo Minjoon's back getting farther away. Emily looked at Alan and said.

“It seems that we just met one of the winning candidates.”

“.....I wonder. Maybe that was the best he could do. If he doesn't get better, he probably won't be able to hold the trophy. Because this competition is unexpectedly intense.”

“You think so? Joseph. What about you?”

Joseph was shut for a while, and slowly opened his mouth.

“The bream was delicious.”

It was brief but Alan and Emily understood the meaning behind it. Right, they only evaluated dishes. Not the chef, but the dish. This competition was as simple as that.

Normally, those who passed the preliminaries liked to boast with all kinds of methods. Hiding the badge under the clothes to act as if they failed and then taking it out. And there were even those who put it on their mouth and then spit it. However Jo Minjoon didn't like to boast like that.

Jo Minjoon just walked out after putting the badge on his chest. The audience looked at the badge and cheered and applauded. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly and received their cheers. The Dean family went to him. After Lucas held Jo Minjoon once, he said while laughing.

“I knew you would pass.”

“I also knew.”

The PD(Program Director) who was looking at that sight next to the cameraman made a weird face. Not because he was displeased with that action, but because he had too many things to think about. Jo Minjoon was certainly a participant that was worth spending broadcasting time on him. He even got to the second phase of the preliminaries, and his skills weren't bad either. Also his story was certain. The Dean family were interviewed about their story while Jo Minjoon was being evaluated.

‘It is certainly good merchandise.’

The problem was, what kind of character he had to be. For now, the current Jo Minjoon had four characteristics. First, the passion for travelling to the next corner of the world to participate in

Grand Chef. Second, his confident and right attitude. Third, the point that he's asian. The fourth and last was kind of obvious, but it was his cooking skills.

Depending on how harmoniously they produced it, the program's would vary accordingly. Of course, because of one participant there wouldn't be an eye changing transformation.

While the PD was wondering like that, Jo Minjoon went with the Dean family to where the audience was and watched the participants. There were at least 20 countertops, and it was never vacant. Jo Minjoon checked at the participant's levels. They were mostly level 5, and sometimes, even level 4's could be seen. Unexpectedly, there couldn't be seen any level 6's.

If you thought about it, it was kind of obvious. Although Jo Minjoon was the youngest from his restaurant before reincarnating, his skills were better than some of the esdest. Even after college, he had cooked thousands of times. His experience, honestly talking, was almost perfect for an amateur.

That Jo Minjoon was level 6. And that was after he got to the US, broadened his knowledge and horizons, and leveled up because of that. If level 6 participants were common on an amateur program like Grand Chef, then that would be rather strange.

The completed dish sucked even more. They had to cook a dish that could change their lives in a place they were not accustomed to, with people they weren't accustomed to. In that situation, it was difficult to show your skills like you normally would.

What Jo Minjoon grasped was that if your level was 6, when you cooked like you normally would, the average cooking score would also be 6. Only after utilizing the best recipe, the freshest ingredients and cooking without mistakes could he get a 7.

But those who were only level 5 were that nervous, their cooking core couldn't help but be low. Unexpectedly someone was able to make a 6 points dish, but would that person be able to satisfy the judges?

It was at that moment. One countertop got free, and a girl got in. Jo Minjoon's face froze when he looked at her face. She was someone he knew. He couldn't help but know.

“Kaya..... Lotus.”

It was her. He knew that she participated the preliminaries in New York, but he didn't imagine that they would do so in the same day. The worst genius Grand Chef could produce. It was hard believing that they would make contact. Before reincarnating, she was an idol he couldn't reach. Grand Chef's season 3 winner. At the same time she was Jo Minjoon's most adored idol.

Kaya was a participant that was the topic of conversation. Not only did she have skills, she had the abilities to become a star. The combination of being a white person and being from the lower class. To be called as white thrash, Kaya was excessively splendid. Her curly black hair was tied, her eyes were painted black with smokey makeup and were decadently beautiful, but they seemed to

be poisonous.

Jo Minjoon stared blankly at her eyes. The sky blue eyes were shining under her black makeup. A strong aura seemed to emanate from her. It seemed as if she wanted to devour everyone from the broadcast.

Under the pressure of her aura, it was after a while that Jo Minjoon saw her state window. And he lost his words. The moment he got a hold of the system, Jo Minjoon thought that he had gotten ahold one of the most important abilities. However that wasn't it. It was a rule that like every things, standards would get deviated. And at this moment, Jo Minjoon was a chef that didn't have any special abilities. He was only comparable to a star that lost it's brightness under the sun.

Jo Minjoon looked at her as if he was on a trance. The icebox over her counter wasn't opened yet, but Jo Minjoon already knew what was inside of it. Eel. On this preliminaries, she would present a combination of boiled down eel with sauce, and mimosa salad.

As soon as Kaya started, she started to deal with the eel. Her knife skills were so clean that you wouldn't believe it was from an 18 year old. Born on 1992. Even with the korean method\*(TL:Koreans start counting the age when they are still a fetus. Think so), she still wasn't 19. That girl who wasn't even on her twenties was handling the eel as if she was a master from a japanese restaurant.

Kaya, after slicing the eel, poured white wine and some salt. And after that she started to boil some eggs, and on the other hand, she started to make the sauce that was going to be put on the eel. The

ingredients were simple. Ginger, garlic, soy, white scallions, mustard leaf, and basil. After she put those things on the mixer, she applied it on the eel and also put lemon peels. Easily speaking, it was a lemon peel marinated with sugar. And after dealing with the eel, she started to prepare the mimosa salad.

For the mimosa salad, after carving the inside of a lettuce, you opened it as if it was a flower blooming and above it, put the salad. The first thing Kaya did, was slicing apples, onions, and cucumbers. After that were the boiled eggs. After squashing the eggs like scrambled eggs, she mixed it with mayonnaise, mustard and pepper. And after that, she seasoned a portion of avocado with salt and pepper and put it on the salad. She sprayed lemon juices over it, and after that was the eel.

And this moment was the highlight. She put the eel on the grill and turned on the gas fire. It could only be said that it was a reckless action. Cooking with a grill, or precisely speaking, cooking directly on fire was a really difficult thing. Of course, Jo Minjoon roasted the bell pepper directly, but there were no problems if he burnt it. Rather, it was a method that needed the bell pepper to be burnt.

However eel was different. The tender fish burnt rather easily in front of fire. But it was also applied with sauce so there was nothing else to say. It was a combination that the exterior got burnt, and the insides were still raw. That being added that the fire on the counter was the first time lit.

However Kaya didn't hesitate. She could see things ordinary people couldn't. It was also possible that she could read the path of

the fire. Jo Minjoon honestly thought like that. Controlling the distance between the fire and the grill, and cooking the eel. That sense of feeling was near to a god's ability.

‘Would I be able to do that?’

I can. A thousand, or ten thousands. If I could practice several years I would be able to cook the eel like that. However he couldn't right now. In this moment, Jo Minjoon thought that it was an ability bestowed by a god. He didn't want to walk the path of cooking slowly. He wanted to be able to cook to the point that even Kaya wasn't able to copy him. Not in the near future, but right now.

He felt his throat running dry. The stat points of Kaya could be seen once again. Nineteen. He could see the ability of a chef that hadn't even bloomed properly.

[Kaya Lotus]

Cooking level: 7

Bakery level: 6

Tasting level: 10

Decorations level: 6



## Chapter 14: Grand Chef Preliminaries, And... (5)

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The unique aroma only a well roasted eel had, tickled his nose. The people observing Kaya's dish unconsciously gulped. And no one could see her dish with cold eyes. It was unavoidable. If you possessed a nose and a tongue it was unavoidable to gulp. It was that kind of dish.

Kaya sliced the eel and put it on the mimosa salad. Jo Minjoon could vaguely imagine that taste. The lemon peel's that were used instead of sugar, caramelized on top of the fire and could bring out the flavor even more. It was refreshing and erased the fishy smell at the same time, and the white wine's aroma that was used could still be felt.

The combination of the mimosa salad was difficult to imagine. Eggs, mayonnaise, and mustard, would that flavor be able to mix well with eel? If you were slightly off, the egg was felt fishy. But because it was Kaya Lotus, she handled it easily. He removed the fishy smell to the flavor he was imagining.

And after that it was perfect. The tasty eggs and the eel's deep flavor, it was as if you mixed fish with meat and that flavor was even deeper. The onions and the cucumbers saved the freshness in your mouth, and the lettuce was to compensate for the lack of chewing sensation. It was a well balanced dish. The combination of the eel and the mimosa salad was perfect. And the result of that was also shown on the system.

[Mimosa salad and grilled eel]

Freshness: 85%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking points: 8/10

Jo Minjoon looked at those points dumbfoundedly. 8 points. This was a scam. Of course it was Kaya's own work, but for it to be 8 points.... Didn't that mean that it could be a dish served in a Michelin restaurant?

'She's not on the level to be participating on Grand Chef.'

Jo Minjoon laughed without any strength. And there was one camera that was recording Jo Minjoon. It was recording Jo Minjoon's eyes not being able to put off of Kaya's. And the one that was holding the camera wasn't the cameraman but the PD that took the camera from him.

'A man's pureness always ends up being a prize.'

The PD smiled and zoomed on Jo Minjoon's face. It didn't matter what thoughts that man was having, what the camera was recording right now was the sight of a man that was staring amazed. The meaning varied from how the viewers interpreted it. And just inserting subtitles to the screen was enough to persuade the thoughts of the viewers easily.

Kaya put the dish on the cart and went to meet the judges. The audience, dazed, looked at the leaving Kaya's back. However there

was no need to wait that long. It hasn't been a while and Kaya already came back from the room where the judges were.

Of course, with a badge on her chest.

“You were staring intently at Kaya a while before.”

During the interview, those words came out of nowhere. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes widely and looked at the PD. The PD's name was Marin Osburn. He was 31 years old, and the smile he had was enough to make everyone well disposed of him.

“You are 21 right? It's a good age. When I was also your age I had quite a few crushes.”

Theoretically speaking he was indeed 21. Because it hasn't been his birthday yet. Jo Minjoon replied with a trembling voice.

“I think you are misunderstanding something.”

“Am I? I didn't look clearly and interpreted it like that.”

Maybe it pinched him a little but Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“Her cooking skills were really outstanding today. I was just admiring her skills for a moment.”

“If you say it was outstanding, do you mean she's better than you?”

Marin asked jokingly. Jo Minjoon hesitated a moment. His thoughts were clear. He was still lacking compared to Kaya. And that difference wouldn't get shorter in a short time. However saying it himself was like a humiliation. Jo Minjoon replied resignedly.

“She was the best participant today. She was more than anyone I had ever seen. And probably will be the best from this competition.”

When Jo Minjoon was thinking that he replied well, Marin thought of something funny. What if he cut the part where Jo Minjoon said she was the best and uploaded it like that? Of course, that was rather excessive. Marin opened his mouth while having all kinds of thoughts.

“Saying that she is be the best from this tournament. Does that mean that you think she will win?”

“If nothing out of ordinary happens, she will. And I hope to become the one to upset that.”

Jo Minjoon's speech was unexpectedly professional. He wasn't brought up in an english talking country, but the words and phrasing he utilized surpassed that of natives. In truth, it couldn't be helped to be like that. Because Korea's way of teaching was to teach difficult english instead of usual ones. Sophistically speaking, knowing difficult english denominations but not knowing how to reply was normal for a Korean.

Of course, knowing difficult words didn't make your speech more professional. The reason Jo Minjoon's words seemed more sublime was because Jo Minjoon had already thought of what to say

beforehand. It's fault was because it wasn't his native language, but also because he didn't want to be someone who casually said things.

“It's a good ambition. Personally I want you, Jo Minjoon, to win the tournament.”

“.....I get the feeling that you have already said that to those you already interviewed.”

“Busted.”

Marin said that and smiled. Then continued speaking.

“I heard from the company that came with you a brief story. It seems that as soon as you came to the US you went through a big incident.”

“I don't want to talk about that.”

“Minjoon. A good story makes good results. Of course, this program puts more emphasis on cooking, but think if there's a case where food tastes the same. Based on your story, the judges may or not favor you. Because they are also people.”

“.....I would prefer getting disqualified. I don't want winning with a story instead of my cooking.”

“You said that you wanted to make this your stage. Minjoon, is your resolution only this much?”

At Marin's words Jo Minjoon's gaze grew sharper. Resolution? What kind of resolution was he talking about? The resolution of making the Dean's family's tears a light gossip? He said with a very aggravated tone. It seemed as if a pariah dog was going to growl.

“My resolution is making a delicious dish. That’s all.”

Marin didn’t reply and just looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon didn’t avert his eyes as if he didn’t want to lose. Marin said with a bitter smile.

“You are a good person. A good chef.”

He said that sincerely. While living as a PD of Grand Chef, Marin had met all kinds of people and talked about various things. Although it was a cooking program, it looked to stimulate the viewers rather than the quality of the dish. The PD’s sought at least a little more of an appealing story from the participants. And the participants even made up stories sometimes.

The reason the broadcast altered reality was simple. So there were more viewers. And there was also a reason for the participants to do that. They wanted to get sympathy. They wanted to fill their dishes with tears and emotions.

Saying the truth, that was rather effective. If the dish was on the same standards, the PD asked the judges to give the participants that had a more preferable story or could become a star. Of course, the judges didn’t like that, but when they were presented dishes on the same level, they had a rather difficult time choosing. At those times, even they didn’t have chance but to favour those star participants. They wouldn’t be choosing willingly but certainly, the effectiveness was obvious.

And the guy in front of him was trying to give up on his story. Of course, Jo Minjoon's story wasn't any bad. An asian college student having the passion to become a chef, and crossing to the other side of the world for that purpose. However, the emotion on that story was a bit lacking.

“.....You may regret it. Minjoon, your story in New York with the Dean family may become a really heavy weapon. A PD like me guarantees you that. Even so, are you unwilling to mention your story?”

“Yes. I'm not doing so.”

Marin shut his mouth for a moment. Soon, when he opened his mouth, a smile just like the first time could be seen.

“Good. Minjoon. I believe on your decision. This program is one that you win with your cooking skills. Only then can you do so in a place like this.”

“.....Thank you for understanding.”

Jo Minjoon replied while loosening his expression. Looking at that Jo Minjoon, Marin said seriously.

“I hope you become the winner.”

It was the second time he heard that. However it's meaning was completely different from the first time. Jo Minjoon smiled.

“It seems I got a reassuring fan.”

# Chapter 15: The 100 Chefs (1)

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The people who passed to the second round were basically set to be a hundred people. But in reality you couldn't exactly know if there were a hundred or not. Because the broadcast didn't show each one of them.

And right now, Jo Minjoon could know the truth.

'98,99,100.... There's exactly a hundred.'

He didn't know how they made it to exactly be 100. But one of his curiosities were resolved. The people who passed to the second round were a hundred. There weren't less nor more. Exactly 100. The differences from all around the country that were elected were gathered here.

Jo Minjoon took out a zipper bag. Inside it were different coloured jellies, enlarged like worms. It was made by Jessie. After the incident on that day, whenever she was bored, she would make some jelly.

"Not delicious."

It was an honest thought. It wasn't sweet, nor soft. If you kept on chewing, it just hurt your mandible. And that was the worst kind of jelly. But somehow, when he chewed that, the nervousness all faded away. Should he say that it was as his parents were holding his hands?



The participants were holding conversations with the people around with a nervous face surrounded by the installed cameras. The broadcasting place was inside Grand Chef's building in Chicago. The 5 floored building was a place only people with connections with Grand Chef could get in. Even the rooms the participants could stay were provided inside. Of course, it didn't mean that all 100 participants could stay. The rooms for the participants were at least 30. And.

‘That means that at least 70 of us are not going to pass.’

After letting a short sigh, Jo Minjoon turned his head. And soon put on a face. Next to him was seated a familiar person. Kaya. It was Kaya Lotus.

It wasn't like they seated together on purpose. It was because they were both participants from New York. Although the seats weren't assigned by countries, the participants that entered in the room ordered themselves as if they were being loaded on a truck. They weren't an exception just because they came together from New York. The four people that passed were on a state that didn't even know why they were like that.

“Ahem, how about we present ourselves properly? Earlier on the plane I thought I was dying of awkwardness. I'm Amanda Olsen.”

The one who opened her mouth was a fat, no, a big bodied white girl. She was a ginger with freckles, and because of the fat on her face, it was difficult to determine her age. However he was sure that she was at least on her thirties. The one who replied Amanda was a black man near Jo Minjoon's age. He had a height that

seemed to surpass 180cms but compared to his height, he was quite the timid type. He said while laughing awkwardly.

“Oh..... I’m Marco Denver.”

“Jo Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon replied briefly. He was a bit unkind, but he didn’t want to hold a long conversation with people he would probably soon separate. He didn’t want to make friends in vain, because in case they disqualified he would feel uncomfortable. Precisely speaking, he was thinking that about Amanda. Jo Minjoon, before reincarnating used to watch Grand Chef season 3. And even knew who passed and who did not. For Kaya, it was obvious. Because she was the winner. And.....

‘Marco. This person got to the top 10, probably.’

He didn’t exactly know when he got disqualified, but he remembered that he survived for quite a while. However Amanda didn’t. In the first place, Jo Minjoon didn’t even see her on the broadcast. Even if he did, that scene didn’t give him a deep impression. If that wasn’t the case, then there would be no way to not remember her.

Holding a long conversation with someone who was soon going to get disqualified, only he would feel bad. Even so, it wasn’t that he chose to distance himself only with Amanda. So Jo Minjoon chose to distance with everyone. In the first place, he wasn’t even feeling comfortable. The mission that was soon coming, Jo Minjoon knew well. So he practiced beforehand..... But he wasn’t

confident that he was going to be successful.

“What about you? What’s your name?”

Amanda asked Kaya that was keeping her mouth shut. Kaya looked at Amanda. Her trademark, the smokey make up, made her eyes more frightening, but Amanda just looked at Kaya laughing hospitably. At her laugh, Kaya couldn’t seem to keep acting crudely. She let a sigh and said.

“Kaya Lotus. I’m a bit sensitive, so if possible I would like to be silent.”

Her husky voiced combined well with her blunt tone of the voice. Amanda stopped for a moment, and looked at Kaya’s body. Her skinny body stood up even more next to Amanda. Amanda said with a smile. Looking at that, Jo Minjoon thought inwardly. That it could be a useless thought to distance himself from others. Until now, he didn’t have an opportunity to like a person with that kind of smile.

“Are you tired? Cooking is stamina. Being slim must be quite difficult.”

Kaya looked at Amanda flabbergasted. And slowly raised her fist. It was at that moment when Amanda looked at that fist confused. The middle finger of the fist slowly rose. Looking at the fat Amanda’s face, Kaya said with a sharp voice.

“Your jokes are lacking compared to your weight.”

Jo Minjoon couldn't help but laugh by himself. The reason Kaya was called as the worst genius was precisely because of her attitude. Sensitive and sharp like a stray cat. Kaya Lotus was someone who could satisfy the audience by showing her wild image without the need of editing.

So rather, she became more popular. Her wild attitude was funny and pleased them. Of course it wouldn't be so pleasurable if you were on the side that got attacked. Even so, Kaya didn't fight anyone. She only acted like that like Amanda's example just now.

And Amanda wasn't as big hearted to receive that gesture. She opened her mouth while flushing her cheeks.

“You, why are you talking like.....!”

However Amanda couldn't end her sentence. Before she could say what she wanted to, steam blew out of the stage, and from the door behind it came the judges. They were Joseph, Alan and Emily. Immediately all the participants shut themselves. From the judges, Joseph was the first to speak.

“Congratulations. You are the selected few from the thousands. It's good to feel proud just by being in this place.”

Nobody opened their mouths. Joseph looked at the participants and smiled. Alan, who was next to him, said with a cold voice.

“One of you today will become the Grand Chef. Nobody knows if that will be you, or the person next to you.”

No, Jo Minjoon knew. He knew who would be the protagonist of this competition. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. She was looking at the judges with an expression hard to decipher. At that moment, Kaya turned her head. Her sky blue eyes were staring at Jo Minjoon. She opened her mouth. It seemed as if she wanted to say something, but at that moment, Emily’s voice sounded from the speakers and covered Kaya’s voice.

“The winner will take 300 thousand dollars along with glory!”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. He didn’t have interest on the judge’s stories. However, when he wanted to say something to Kaya, his voice got covered under the cheers of the participants. Jo Minjoon let a sigh and turned his sight to the stage. When the cheers died a little, Joseph opened his mouth. It was a harsh rather than soft voice.

“Then I’ll reveal the first mission of Grand Chef.”

Along with what he said, the walls on the broadcasting zone opened. And a truck containing a huge container was coming in. Even if it was the first floor, won’t the floor collapse? The truck was so big it made people think that.

The participants looked nervously at the truck. However Jo Minjoon wasn’t. Because he knew what was inside of it. Joseph said with a rough voice.

“The menu for the first mission....”

Even before he finished speaking, the walls of the container box started to open. And at that sight, the participants laughed dumbfounded. Joseph continued speaking.

“It’s catfish.”

Inside the aquarium the many catfishes were swimming. Jo Minjoon thought of the recipe he prepared in his head. And as he did so, besides him appeared a window like always.

[The estimated cooking score is 7.]

## Chapter 16: The 100 Chefs (2)

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7 points. That was also the best he could do right now. However Jo Minjoon didn't relax. Because making a 7 points dish was the utmost of his skills. He got that score because of the strength of the system. To check the recipe beforehand and its success probabilities.

If he didn't have the systems strength, Jo Minjoon would be making a lot of 5 points dishes. Because you couldn't be certain if a recipe was good or not before cooking. It was already god's blessing and consideration for letting him free of worries for his recipes.

Of course, compared to Kaya he didn't know if it was a blessing. However she was a real genius. She didn't have a weird ability like Jo Minjoon, she had real skills. Saying that the both had the same abilities was something to be embarrassed about.

He thought that comparing himself with Kaya was a really childish thing. Jo Minjoon was a reasonable person. If he felt bitter but only hurt him, he believed that he didn't have the need to think about it. Being jealous of an ability he didn't have was a really childish thing to do.

“We'll give you 1 hour. Finish your dish in that time.”

At those words, the participants gathered towards the container. Watching those many competitors going to the container was really a sight. Marco and Amanda were running there. Jo Minjoon

just stood still and looked at them. Anyways, he was given an hour. So he thought that it wasn't necessary to immediately handle the catfish.

He thought like that and went towards the room where the basic ingredients were. It was at that moment, Kaya was walking right next to him. He slightly glanced at her. She looked back at Jo Minjoon with a scary face and then opened her mouth.

“What are you looking at?”

“I doesn't look like you are going to catch a catfish.”

“Even if I go now or later it's the same. But it's better to get other ingredients instead of being clustered over there.”

“Clever.”

“You are also doing that. Aren't you self praising yourself by praising me?”

Jo Minjoon laughed and evaded the question. There were quite a few who were going to get fresh ingredients. Among them, was a tall and handsome blonde man. Anderson..... Jo Minjoon thought for a moment. What was his last name? He didn't remember. He remembered one thing. That he got the second place.

Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson's status window. The window showed the last name he didn't remember.

[Anderson Rousseau]

Cooking level: 7

Bakery level: 7



Tasting level: 8

Decoration level: 7

His cooking level was the same as Kaya's. But unexpectedly, his bakery and decorations level were higher than Kaya's. It could be expected. Anderson Rousseau was an elite of the elites who got a genius like education since small. It was kind of obvious for him to be at that level. However, he lost to Kaya. Why could that be? Because he didn't have a dramatic background like her?

‘Probably, her dish was better than his.’

Even if they were at the same level 7, Kaya's skills were different. Because his cooking levels probably didn't include reading fire like Kaya. However Jo Minjoon knew that, reading the path of the fire wasn't all of Kaya. A genius like sense which surpassed all of that. He couldn't precisely express it like that , but she had an ability to bring the flavor of an ingredient to it's utmost.

Jo Minjoon hurriedly picked his ingredients. Those were all ingredients bought in the same place and at the same time, but there were differences among them. It was more efficient to be picking better ingredients than to be picking alive cat fishes of the same quality in that crowd.

The dish Jo Minjoon decided to make was catfish meatball stew(메기완자탕). At first, he wanted to make some spicy stew(매운탕), but it depended heavily on miso paste and pepper paste. Even if it tasted good, how good would it be in a foreign country? It was weak regarding to giving a deep flavor. On top of that, spicy stew

was tasty only for koreans. The chances for a foreigner to claim that it tasted bad was high.

So Jo Minjoon took the characteristic of the spicy stew, and decided to make a slightly spicy catfish meatball stew. And the ingredients it contained were simple. Tofu, lemon, starch, eggs, pepper, coriander, radish, scallion, salt and soy sauce.

They were ingredients that were normally in people's houses. And if you wanted to point something special, it was the coriander. There were many who sought top ingredients like saffron or salami, but Jo Minjoon didn't pay them any heed. Making a dish with basic ingredients and give it flavor was rather well viewed.

Jo Minjoon put the ingredients on his countertop and went to where the catfish were. Almost all of the people were returning with a catfish on their hands. Saying the truth, it was his first time catching a live fish with his bare hands, but he was confident.

Jo Minjoon caught a catfish with a net and came back to his countertop with the fish on his hands. It was 40cm long. It was roughly an arm long. It was so strong that only preventing it from escaping was exhausting enough.

The way to knock out the catfish was simple. To beat it with the edge of the countertop, or simmer it in salt, or beating it with the knife's back. Jo Minjoon chose the last option. When the catfish that was on top of the counter looked at Jo Minjoon, he beat it with the back of the knife.

With a loud sound, the catfish twitched a little and finally stopped moving. It was probably knocked. Jo Minjoon put the tip of his knife on the catfish. Blood flowed for a while, and that was the end.

Jo Minjoon cautiously cut the gills. And used the knife to slice it's stomach, pulled out the guts and took out the fishbone. After that was the skin. He didn't need to remove the scales, because catfishes didn't have them. But because of that, it's skin was really tough. If you cooked it well, the skin became gooey. But the problem was that cooking it well was difficult.

Jo Minjoon slowly peeled the skin off. The main point was to peel the skin as thinly as possible. Fortunately, it peeled off quite thinly.

It was at that moment. Alan passed by Jo Minjoon. It seemed as if he was just looking around, but he wasn't. The table next to him. Alan said coldly in front of Amanda.

“The guts erupted.”

It was a mistake she made while slicing the stomach. As the guts erupted, blood stained the meat. Amanda replied with an embarrassed face.

“Ah, I'm sorry. It's my first time with catfish....”

“Enough. Give me your badge.”

“Che, chef!”

Amanda was pale. Jo Minjoon didn't want to pay attention to them, but he couldn't block out their voices. Alan was talking with a conservative tone.

“You have done well.”

It was a brief word, and it was also a brief declaration. Amanda put a face as if she was going to cry any moment and yelled.

“I..... I bet everything in this competition!”

Even with that begging voice, Alan didn't hesitate. He looked slowly at the participants. He opened his mouth.

“Is there someone who didn't bet everything in this competition?”

No one replied at that question. Alan looked at Amanda and his gaze grew sharp.

“If you want me to give you my opinion, then show me your skills as much as your passion. What I can see right now from you is a broken catfish corpse. I wouldn't like to put that thing in my mouth. Amanda. Are you a chef? If that's so, give me that trashy badge! That's only if you are a chef that puts trash in people's mouths.”

Amanda returned the badge trembling. Alan received that badge, and looked towards the participants that were looking at him. And

said with a calm voice.

“Anyone who has a problem handling the catfish will be kicked out. This is not a school. People who can’t even handle a single ingredient doesn’t have the right to be here. Get ahold of yourselves.”

They grew nervous. It wasn’t only Jo Minjoon. Knowing that they could get eliminated just preparing your dish, the participants continued with a clearer gaze. Jo Minjoon looked at the back of Amanda crying and getting out. He could never end like that. Ever. Even if he got disqualified because his dish tasted bad, at least he wanted to finish his dish.

He didn’t waste time. The first thing Jo Minjoon did was cutting the catfish head. Jo Minjoon boiled water on a pot and put the catfish head, radish, and scallions. And he also put the fishbone. He was thinking of making the gravy. He put some lemon in case it had a fishy smell, and started to handle the catfish meat.

Every time he hit it with the back of his knife, it transformed like fish cake. Originally, it’s meat was already soft. So it wasn’t that hard to mince it. The next step was simple. After squeezing the water out of the tofu, sliced the coriander. The next step was mixing it together, adding starch and slamming the dough.

This part was really important. If he didn’t slam enough to create enough stickiness, in the process the dough is getting cooked, the probabilities of it’s insides breaking were high. For the usual Jo Minjoon, it would be a really hard challenge. Because it wasn’t that it didn’t have chances for failure.

However he wasn't right now. Jo Minjoon already knew that the theme of the mission would be catfish, and after qualifying, he got to prepare the next dish. For all the meals, he prepared catfish meatball stew, and each time he cooked it he felt a difference on the dishes. What he was making right now was the result of hard work. There was no place for mistakes.

## Chapter 17: The 100 Chefs (3)

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The catfish dough seemed like a white background with a green dot in it. Frankly, it wasn't splendid nor was a nice to see. But meatball was usually eaten like that. It was boring and seemed hard to eat. Instead of it being a disadvantage was rather an unique characteristic.

Jo Minjoon rolled the dough roundly with his thumb and his index finger. And then, he put it on the steamer. He was thinking of cooking it like that.

The next part was to cook the stew properly. Jo Minjoon sliced the garlies thinly and the scallions. Then, he greased the wok and started to fry it like that. Of course, after all he had done, it wasn't that he changed the course of his cooking. Before cooking the stew, you gave it an oily sensation. And depending on that, it could change the hot flavor.

When the garlic and the scallions were cooked to an extent, Jo Minjoon put in the onions. The onions, that were cut horizontally, lost all of its strength when put on the scorching wok. And it was time to put in the gravy. Jo Minjoon covered the sieve with a cotton cloth, and poured the gravy on top of it. On one hand, the sieve. On the other one, the pot. The gravy wasn't much but still, it was a rather bothersome posture.

When the gravy flowed through the wok, the moment the water met the oil, it produced a sizzling sound. And at the same time, the gravy's deep aroma flowed. The participants who were near him couldn't help but turn to it. It was that deep. And at the same time Jo Minjoon was sure. That he had succeeded. He could guess that

only by smelling. It wasn't because he had made it many times before. But the aroma contained the flavor itself. The fresh flavor of the vegetables, and the unique clean flavor of the catfish.

Of course he had to taste it to know if it was salty or not. Jo Minjoon seasoned it with soy sauce and salt. He couldn't use much of the soy sauce. He could season it, but it would dye it with its black colour if used too much. Then you would wonder if you could only use salt, but the flavor was different. The saltiness of the salt and of the soy sauce were completely different. And it didn't always have a salty flavor. It had the flavor of soy sauce. It was sour, and had a sharp taste. That was soy sauce.

Now it wasn't different to a completed dish. But he didn't want to end it like this. To only present the gravy with the meatballs, he couldn't help but remembering what Alan had pointed out to him before.

So what he chose was catfish skin fry. Jo Minjoon buried the already peeled skin on starch. And then started to fry it on the greased pan. It didn't take that long. After putting the whitely fried catfish skin on top of the counter, the only thing left to do was to wait.

Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings. The participants were still preparing their dishes. Jo Minjoon that was looking at them all over stopped at one person. It was Kaya. On her frying pan surged flames to what she was cooking. Was she cooking a chinese dish? Jo Minjoon searched through his memories. She was probably making [Tangsuyuk](#)(탕수육).



Kaya was british american, but her dishes weren't limited to western ones. She really cooked a wide variety of foods.

Because of that, Kaya talked about her background on broadcast. Since she was small, she had to help her mother on selling fruits. Kids their age were playing with toys and dolls, while she played together with the market merchants. However, that experience helped tremendously on her tasting experiences. Because there were various ingredients and foods that couldn't normally be seen, nor tasted.

Of course, if a normal person was in that situation, even if they knew the varieties, they wouldn't know deeply about it's flavor. Because it was market food, it was really simple. And the complicated thing could only be the grilled eel Kaya had cooked before.

However, even if they ate the same dishes, Kaya tasted different things. For normal people a minimum difference couldn't be felt. But Kaya felt one grain of salt as one tablespoon of it. Even on the same dishes, if she seasoned it once, it became even more delicious. Because it was that kind of ability, the market could be the perfect school for her.

Even the way Kaya approached cooking, the method was different. When a part timer that worked on a [roasted food on a skewer](#) (꼬치구이) house flipped the stick following the recipe, Kaya could know how much it took him to flip it, and how the sliced parts of the meat could influence it's roasting. It wasn't that she was doing it consciously. She comprehended it all naturally.

She was born with it. It couldn't be explained otherwise. Jo Minjoon got a thought. That he wanted to be a judge. That he wanted to try Kaya's food on the judge's seat. Aside from cooking, just knowing that the dish was made by Kaya held great prestige.

It was at that moment that he was looking at her. Alan approached Jo Minjoon's table. After he saw the pots over the fire, he opened his mouth.

“What are you making?”

“Catfish meatball stew.”

“Catfish meatball stew? Hmm... Did you fry this skin?”

“Yes. A long time ago, I saw once that people from southern asia ate it like a snack.”

“Do you think it will suit your dish?”

“Yes. It will.”

Jo Minjoon's had a pretty confident attitude. Even Alan, that was listening to him got surprised. He had been a judge for all of the previous seasons, but he had never seen someone this confident. Because, even if you did cook well, in front of the judges, you couldn't help but showing no confidence.

Alan frowned. Normally there were two cases for this. The first was where you had real experience and talent, and the second was the case that you did know how to give it flavor, but didn't know how to make the best out of it. Honestly, Alan thought it was the latter. Jo Minjoon was young. He was only 21 by American standards. To be confident on his dish when he didn't receive proper education, he was really young.

“.....I expect that your dish turns out as good as your confidence.”

Alan talked like that and left. Jo Minjoon felt that Alan didn't receive his confidence that well. However he didn't care. Because he was going to let his dish do the talking.

The given time was almost finished. On the cooking preparations, there were many who got kicked out because of their mistakes. They numbered almost twenty. Jo Minjoon took out the meatballs from the steamer. Fortunately, they were perfectly cooked. As soon as he opened the steamer, he could feel the aroma of the fish, tofu and coriander. And that sensation was so charming he wanted to immediately put it in his mouth. So he did.

And a smile formed on Jo Minjoon's face. Could it be because of the satisfaction that the dish was well made? Or the natural smile that blossomed when you ate something delicious? Either way, the conclusion was the same. The meatball was perfect.

Jo Minjoon poured the gravy on a concave dish, and placed the meatballs on top of it. The catfish fried skin was acting as a garnish but, it had a quite boring look. Maybe even this time he was going to hear complaints about his decorations.

However just because of that, he didn't want to get greedy and put on a lot of garnishes. Because if you wanted to give a momentary pleasure and forget pleasuring the tongue, it was just meaningless.

“Stop! Everybody stop your hands. Time is over.”

Alan shouted with a sharp voice. Sighs could be heard here and there. Some were sighs of relief and some were dejected sighs. Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at Kaya. There was nothing different with the past. In front of her was placed a well done catfish tangsuyuk.

There wasn't time to waste and the judging started immediately. There were many people that got disqualified while cooking, but there were still as many as 60 participants left. There wasn't time to make it too long, so sometimes, the judges didn't even eat the dishes and evaluated depending of how well was the interior cooked.

In the middle of cooking, Jo Minjoon felt a strange feeling. It was that right in front of his eyes, many people were being disqualified. At times because of a bad slice, and on others, because of a bite of the meat. It seemed like that scenery contained the chefs world. Cooking. A world that solely depended on that one thing.

There wasn't even a word of sympathy, nor encouragement. The only thing was 'it's delicious' and 'it's not'. There were also times that they threw the cooking on the dish to the bin. You could shed tears by those excessive behaviors, but Jo Minjoon could understand them. It was unacceptable. For the ingredients to meet the wrong people and for them to make something that couldn't be called cooking was something terrible. And much more if that was someone who was dreaming of becoming a chef.

And the judging time came to Jo Minjoon. The judges, after looking at Jo Minjoon's catfish meatball stew, put it on their mouths. The catfish fried skin that made crumbling sounds inside the mouth accompanied the chewing meatballs. The three didn't say a thing and just kept chewing. After that, they drank some of the soup. The one who opened his mouth was Joseph. He said shortly.

“It's delicious.”

## Chapter 18: The 100 Chefs (4)

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Those were words that didn't need to be long. There wasn't other magic word like 'delicious'. At that short word, Jo Minjoon could once again feel his heart beating. The judges didn't keep wasting words and went past Jo Minjoon. Then continued judging.

Jo Minjoon looked at the catfish meatball stew. There were no mistakes.

[Catfish Meatball Stew]

Freshness: 93%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking Score: 7/10

Jo Minjoon turned his head and looked at the judges. Kaya's turn was near.

Kaya's dish was catfish tangsuyuk with red sauce. The judges took a bite, and said that it was delicious without thinking it twice, and then left her. Even Kaya couldn't make them stay. Because there were still a lot of people to evaluate.

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya's catfish tangsuyuk. It showed that it was a 7 points dish. When he noticed that her cooking level was 7, he could tell that her dishes would probably also be 7.

However at that moment, Jo Minjoon felt the strongest of the temptations. The temptation to go and try Kaya's dish.

Jo Minjoon even tried a 9 points dish in a Michelin restaurant. He didn't have the need to lust over that 7 point dish. In the first place, wasn't it a dish he could make if he didn't do any mistakes? But even so, the catfish tangsuyuk was really charming. Because it was Kaya's cooking.

What chefs put on a plate wasn't only the cooking. The brand they had was put on the plate. Jo Minjoon wondered, what kind of flavor could the name of Kaya add?

However, he couldn't just run to her and try her cooking in the middle of judging. The atmosphere on the place was serious. Because, even at that moment were people being disqualified. Those who heard that their dishes weren't delicious left the room without any strength.

The judges that finished their evaluation went up to the platform. Emily smiled and said with a calm voice as if nothing had happened.

"Congratulations. Earlier was a qualification phase, but now you got to the real qualification phase. From the elected people, you were once again elected."

Jo Minjoon calmly checked his surroundings. There weren't many people left. Thirty, maybe there weren't even that much. With just one judging, this much people were disqualified. Joseph

that was next to Emily, opened his mouth.

“The reason you survived today is simple. You know how to handle the ingredients, and give it flavor. It’s the most important quality for a chef. You have your foundations and are indeed a chef.”

Jo Minjoon thought that Joseph was a really good speaker. Just when he thought that his beating heart calmed down a little, him saying that he was a chef made his heart beat again. It was as if he became a high schooler that fell in love.

“There’s a huge difference between people who cook and chefs. Now you have to hold that responsibility on the tip of your knives. The responsibility to make things delicious. The responsibility to not ruin the ingredients. I hope that you will be able to keep that until the end.”

The silence filled the atmosphere. Jo Minjoon was biting his lips and looking at the judges. Alan opened his mouth.

“The next mission will be in two days. During that time, you are free to stay in the rooms of Grand Chef’s building. Of course, you can use all of the ingredients in the kitchen before you get disqualified. Let’s hope that time to be meaningful.”

As the judges finished their words, they left the place. And so did the participants. They would be really exhausted whatever they did. Because it would be quite burdensome for so many cameras to be installed on the countertops.



However Jo Minjoon didn't leave the place. There was still some catfish meatball stew left. He didn't even fail it, so he didn't want to throw his dish on the bin. Jo Minjoon poured the stew on another plate. There were still 6 more meatballs. After pouring the soup and putting the meatballs, he placed the fried skin.

He took that and went to Kaya. She was one of the participants that didn't leave the countertop. And Jo Minjoon thought that she was thinking the same thing as him. A good cook wouldn't be able to throw their own dishes easily.

As Jo Minjoon got close, Kaya opened her eyes sharply and stared at Jo Minjoon. She was lower than 170cms. She was even wearing high heels but she was at least a hand shorter than Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Do you know about bartering?”

“.....What's that?”

“The manners of our ancestors. I want to experience it. How about it?”

Jo Minjoon said that and pointed her catfish tangsuyuk and his catfish meatball stew with his eyes. Kaya laughed awkwardly.

“You want to trade?”

“I mean that it's okay to share.”

“What if your dish is not delicious?”

“But even the judges said that it was.”

Kaya opened her eyes rebelliously. However the words that came out of her mouth were different to her expression.

“Fine.”

Kaya said that and lifted her fingers. She said with a provocative voice.

“One meatball for one tangsuyuk.”

Of course, what she had just said didn't match with her expression. Jo Minjoon laughed brightly and replied.

“It's a rational deal.”

Jo Minjoon stood next to her and ate the tangsuyuk with a fork. It was certainly a 7 points dish. He got a feeling of something exploding in his head but was not disgusting. A dish which bases were perfect.

The sauce was strong. The aroma roamed around his mouth as if a kind of herb was put, and the catfish meat was perfectly cooked, so it was moist and soft. He thought that the meat was going to crumble because of it's weak characteristic that broke like tofu, but it didn't. Naturally, the crunchy fried coating that was combined with the sauce, and the bland flavor of the meat mixed well with the sauce's sweet flavor.

Jo Minjoon looked at the recipe. There wasn't anything different with a normal tangsuyuk recipe. It was a recipe that immediately popped out of the internet if you searched. The fishy smell was held with lemon, and a sweet potato dough was mixed with potato dough on a 7-3 ratio. Now the point here was to control the amount of cooking oil used.

The next step was like usual. You fried it, and you boiled vinegar, sugar, soy sauce and dough water thickly. And after that, if you put vegetables and pepper powder in that sauce, and cooked it a little was the end.

To get 7 points on a sauce that wasn't special meant that she cooked with her senses that much. Jo Minjoon savored the tangsuyuk and opened his mouth.

"It's delicious."

".....Your's too."

Maybe she wasn't accustomed to compliments, but Kaya replied with an awkward voice. Jo Minjoon couldn't help but find it strange. The person he used to watch on TV was now saying that his dish was delicious.

The feeling you got when you felt something that changed could be described as right now. It seemed as if he was a step closer to his dream. But suddenly, Jo Minjoon started thinking. What was his dream? To make a delicious dish? Or to be a famous chef?

He didn't keep worrying any longer. Kaya was saying with a

flushed face.

“I’m eating one more.”

“What?”

“I’m going to eat one more. Your meatball. So you too, eat one of my tangsuyuk.”

Right. It was bartering. Jo Minjoon laughed and gripped his fork. Right. Even if he made a delicious dish, or became a famous chef, if he could keep cooking with the same heart as he had right now.....

# Chapter 19: Comprehension Towards The Broadcast (1)

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Waiting room, the judges were seated on the sofa and looking at the things over the table. Those were simple things. Photographs. Precisely speaking, the participants photographs. They were looking at a total of 27 photos. Emily opened her mouth.

“Is there any participant you consider worthy?”

“This one. He is the one who has mastered most of the basics.”

The picture Alan chose, was Anderson's. Emily tilted her head and opened her mouth.

“Anderson? Doesn't he lack creativity? He can give flavor, but that's on the level of a 3 minute instantaneous cooking.”

“I wonder. You can't know if he is hiding his abilities on purpose or not. At least his skills were excellent. His appearance when making the catfish steak amazed you.”

“What if he amazes me. He made a crap dish with those amazing skills. Normal people would eat that thing, but for me, it was a sickly flavor. It was as if I had already tried it a thousand times.”

What Anderson showed was catfish steak with onion puree. At that moment, Emily remembered the flavor once more and frowned. The feeling as if you had already tried it somewhere else. Anderson was a chef with no sudden twists. And Emily was already sick of those kinds of chefs. Alan looked at Emily and replied calmly.

“.....If you have skills, then your personality is meant to follow. However, i want to bet on him. He has the most chances from this messy people. Emily, what about you?”

Emily smiled at what he had said and extended her finger. Her long and slender index finger pointed one photograph. Kaya Lotus's photograph.

“I will bet on her.”

“.....Kaya Lotus? She does indeed have skill.....”

Alan frowned. Certainly, Kaya was a charming participant. Her signature menu, the grilled eel, was close to a master's skill. In the whole world, there was no one who could cook grilled eel like Kaya. However.

“Her cooking isn't framed. Nor has an identity. If you take a dog as an example, she would be a cross breed.”

“You heard the contents of the interview. She comes from a market. The dishes that have freedom are her identity. I think so.”

Emily's voice was firm. It seemed as if she has really taken a liking to Kaya. Alan didn't particularly refute Emily. Because evaluating a dish is personal freedom.

Alan looked at Joseph again. He didn't say anything, but Joseph could guess what Alan would have wanted to say. Joseph opened his mouth.

“I still don’t know.”

“Even so, you must have someone you have taken a liking to?”

“I wonder... I like both of the participants you have chosen. Excluding those two, another impressive friend would be Chloe. And....”

Joseph’s words couldn’t be heard clearly, but his sight was looking at a person from the photographs. Alan followed Joseph’s sight. And when he looked at the person he was looking at, and said as if he was amazed.

“Minjoon? No, you are keeping in mind that person?”

“It’s not that I’m keeping him in mind. Simply, he seemed like a person who always shows the utmost of his skills. But I do kind of expect what kind of dish he will be making when he grows.”

“.....Honestly speaking, it’s unexpected. He does have a kind of a base, and even those left on the competition have similar skills like him. Not to talk if he is compared to Kaya or Anderson.”

“Of course, I’m not saying that he is going to win. Compared to Anderson and Kaya, his skills are lacking. I’m just expecting something as a chef. How would that little friend grow. That kind of expectation.”

Joseph looked at Jo Minjoon’s photo. The reason Joseph expected something from Jo Minjoon was simple. A dish that surpassed his skills. And two times at that. There were parts lacking on handling the knife and the use of fire, but the recipe was perfect and didn’t have any flaws. That was the reason Joseph viewed Jo Minjoon so highly.

“I believe that he will at least make a dish better than chewing running shoes.”

—

“Say the truth. You like her, right?”

Martin’s interviewing popped all of a sudden out of nowhere like last time. Jo Minjoon couldn’t get what Martin was implying. Jo Minjoon frowned and asked.

“What are you talking about?”

“Kaya Lotus. I mean her.”

Martin said while laughing mockingly. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and even before he could reply, Martin continued speaking.

“Don’t tell me that you like her as a chef like last time. No matter how you look at it, wasn’t trading your dishes a little too serious? I, who was looking, got more flustered.”

“.....As I told you last time, it’s not like that. That was just adoration from a fan.....”

“Mister Jo Minjoon. Let’s be honest. Kaya just started broadcasting. And just cooked twice. How could that come from a fan?”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t reply anything. He didn’t even know what



to reply. He couldn't just say the he saw her broadcasting from the future, and since then became her fan.

Jo Minjoon started to think. What would be the wisest thing to reply? No, what would be the most comfortable? The conclusion was simple. It was just letting him do as he pleased.

“Fine. Edit it however you want it.”

“.....Yes?”

“That if you want, you can edit it as if I do like her. It's not as if I do have someone I like. And I'm not even married. I'll understand the editing as a fun for the broadcast and agree to it.”

As Jo Minjoon said that, Martin put on an odd face. It was true that he had asked Jo Minjoon about how he felt about Kaya for the sake of the broadcast, but that was because it did look like he felt something for her. But now he was telling him that that was not the case?

‘.....Is he doing it on purpose because he's embarrassed?’

From Martin's point of view, you couldn't help but think like that. Martin said with a voice he didn't want to believe.

“.....Are you really not?”

“I already told you I'm not. It's entirely liking her as a chef.”

“No, even so, isn't she a beauty? Her attitude is a bit harsh, but she is a charming enough woman to consider. Don't you look at her as a woman?”

“.....Is looking at her as a woman the same as liking her?”

“No, of course that’s a bit different.....”

Martin looked at Jo Minjoon with a bugging face. It was really difficult to understand him. Is Jo Minjoon really saying the truth? That he became a fan to a person he saw for the first time? Was Kaya’s grilled eel and tangsuyuk that impressive?

Even if he thought deeply about it, he couldn’t see what a person was thinking about. Martin let out a sigh and changed the question.

“So, how was the flavor of the tangsuyuk you traded? Was it better than your catfish meatball stew?”

“I think that the end result of the dish is similar.”

“How many points out of 10?”

“7 points.”

Jo Minjoon’s voice was firm. He didn’t think twice, nor wonder. Martin remembered the words Jo Minjoon said to the cameraman. He heard from him that Jo Minjoon had said that his bream dish was 7 points. On what standards could that be?

“What extent is 7 points?”

“It’s the utmost I can cook right now. If you are a chef like Kaya, it’s something you get on average.”

“I can’t seem to understand that calculation. Is there anything special?”

“The recipe used, the effort on cooking, and the fresh ingredients would be it. It would be difficult to put it in words. However I am confident on this much.”

Jo Minjoon’s eyes shined. He said confidently like never before.

“My evaluating points are correct.”

“.....I wonder. If it’s the same dish, won’t it vary according to the person who made it? I don’t think there’s a definite point.....”

“Of course, there’s personal taste. However, when you don’t take that into account, my points would be correct objectively speaking.”

“Then I wonder how will you evaluate the participants dishes from now on. Good. Let’s move on to the next question. You came all the way over here from Korea. Are you confident on winning?”

Jo Minjoon kept his mouth shut at that question. He looked at a glass table which had nothing on top for a while, and barely said.

“In my life, there has never been something as confirmation. If it’s about cooking, then all the more so. The reason I came to Grand Chef was to gain that confirmation.”

“.....What kind of confirmation?”

Jo Minjoon replied. It seemed as an earnest voice.

“If I’m allowed to be a chef. I wanted to get that confirmation from myself. No, I want to get that confirmation.”

## Chapter 20: Comprehension Towards The Broadcast (2)

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[Jessie] : So the day the broadcast starts is today?

[Jo Ara] : Oppa, can't you at least call us? Send us a picture.

[Lucas] : I believe you will also do well on the second phase.

Jo Minjoon smiled while looking at the accumulated messages on his cellphone. He was about to reply. Besides him was seated a young man. He had black skin and bulky arms and legs. It was Marco Denver who had come together from New York. Jo Minjoon looked at him and Marco smiled awkwardly. A husky voice with a slightly high tone was heard.

“We are both from New York, right? I just don't have anyone to talk to.”

“I'm not exactly a native. But i'm a participant that came from New York.”

“Well, anyways, don't we know each other by face already.....?”

Marco asked cautiously. The fat youth that was over 190cms tall to show such a timid attitude was quite a sight. Jo Minjoon nodded. It could be said that they already knew each other. Although the atmosphere became awkward because of Kaya's and Amanda's fight, Marco opened his mouth.

“What did they ask you during the interview?”

“I wonder. If I was confident on winning, who seems like a candidate to win. These things?”

There was no need to say that he was questioned whether he liked Kaya or not. Marco asked.

“Who do you think will win?”

“Kaya Lotus.”

Jo Minjoon didn't hesitate a moment and replied. Marco nodded as if he agreed.

“If you saw her cooking in New York it is understandable to think like that.”

“What do other people think about who will win?”

“Well. I don't know as I still haven't interacted with them. Honestly, I think it is too early to determine who the winner will be.”

Jo Minjoon nodded, but he was opposed to that opinion. Putting aside that he came from the future, Jo Minjoon could see the cooking levels of the participants. And what Jo Minjoon grasped right now, was that from the participants who remained, only three had level 7 cooking skills. Kaya Lotus, Anderson Rousseau, and Chloe Jong.

Chloe was half white and half asian. Because of the influence from her chinese mother nationalized american, she could show amazing dishes that other participants couldn't compare to. However, on Jo Minjoon's memories, she was a participant that got disqualified quite early on. If that was not the case, his

memories about Chloe couldn't be that foggy.

Aside from them, they were all level 6. Was it coincidence, or their skills got spotted. There were no people who were level 5 that had survived until now.

In the case of bakery it was different. They were mostly level 5 or 6. If not, they were lower than that. Excluding Anderson that was level 7, there was only another one that was at that level. And that was.....

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

It was Marco. Jo Minjoon looked at this timid afroamerican. It was just a thought he had, but nothing wrong was going to happen just because he was friends with Marco. If he thought about Grand Chef's team missions, it was better to be close to those participants that had skill.

And aside from that, Jo Minjoon liked people who knew how to cook. Baking and cooking were different specializations, but it was similar in being delicious.

“I would like to try your bread once.”

“.....How did you know that I make bread?”

“I'm just saying. You look like you make some good ones.”

Marco started to seriously think if he did look like someone who baked well. Jo Minjoon stood from the place. Marco was looking at

Jo Minjoon with a dumbfounded expression. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Let’s go to the hall. The other people should be there as well.”

Marco put on a dumbfounded expression as if he didn’t understand. Jo Minjoon didn’t get frustrated and calmly explained.

“It’s time for the broadcasting.”

The participants were gathered in front of the TV in the hall. There weren’t only the participants. Some of the staffs were also sitting there. Jo Minjoon, along with Marco, sat in empty seats. The TV showed some advertisements and soon, appeared the initials of Grand Chef. Some cheers could be heard from the participants.

What adorned the broadcast at the start was the presentation of the judges. Some people talked as if they already knew that was going to happen, and the participants faces flashed by really quickly. Among them was also Jo Minjoon’s face. Marco shook Jo Minjoon’s shoulders as if he was amazed.

“Minjoon. Did you see? You just came out!”

“Yeah, I saw.”

Jo Minjoon replied as if he was calm but, saying the truth, he was really excited because it was his first time going out on TV. He

couldn't help but feel his heart thumping.

Jo Minjoon concentrated on the screen. Probably, there weren't even half of the participants that remained that were shown. They had to have amazing stories or great skills. If they weren't any of that, they had to be a really odd character. The first one that appeared was Chloe Jong. She, who was wearing a white qipao, was showing her signature menu. It was [kkuobarou](#)(鍋包肉) mixed with basil. A sweet rice tangsuyuk.

Just by looking at it you could tell that it's light browned sauce was sticky, and because the tangsuyuk and the sauce were fried at the same time, the sauce could be seen as it was seeped in the fry. Emily put a tangsuyuk on her mouth, and as if it was hot, she was blowing air through her mouth. But even that seemed as if she was enjoying it.

Because it was fried, the crunchy sound couldn't be transmitted clearly, but the crunchy sound of chewing sauce padded with basil together with fresh onions was really pleasant. No one, without exception, could take their eyes off the screen.

Of course, what happened after that was that she passed. Looking at Chloe being hugged by her mother, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but feel jealous unconsciously. It would be great if his parents could be together with him. However it was a useless thing. It was true that his parents wanted him to have stability. For the eldest son to embark on the road of cooking without any visions and dedicate his life to it, was something they could only get preoccupied.



Jo Minjoon, frustrated, let out a sigh. It seemed as if many of the participants were now alert of Chloe, because whispering sounds could be heard among them. Jo Minjoon tched his tongue and looked at that sight. It was something pointless. If someone else did good or not, if they got disqualified or not was something that depended on their own cooking skills. For them to check on her like that.....

The TV showed a participant entering that wasn't even on the broadcasting place. 16 years old. A white girl that didn't even lose her baby fat cooked a tenderloin steak. The results were of course, disqualified. At that moment, in the TV sounded the voice of the narrator.

-Even in this season are a lot of young challengers. Look at this participant. Jo Minjoon. He's an asian challenger that crossed the world from the other side believing in his passion of Grand Chef.

Jo Minjoon looked up.

The screen was showing the image of Jo Minjoon. Precisely speaking, it was Jo Minjoon roasting the bream. The scene where he was making the bell pepper sauce was short but after that, showed a zoomed in face of Jo Minjoon and his voice came in.

-There is only one reason I came all the way here from Korea. I want to confirm myself if I'm someone who has the qualifications to cook.

Those were words he once said in an interview. The roasted

bream with bell pepper sauce showed on the screen, and Jo Minjoon's voice rang again.

-For me Grand Chef is a charming competition. It would be good if I'm able to show my cooking skills until the end.

The next was the judging. When he looked at the appearance the judges had when eating his bream, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but feel a bit awkward. Looking at himself trying to be calm when he was clearly nervous, even if it was his face, he couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed and frustrated. When some of the participants gasped of admiration, his embarrassment grew even bigger.

The judging continued. It was just like Jo Minjoon had heard. In the middle of the judging that by the way wasn't bad, Jo Minjoon felt more confused. Why would they put someone who wasn't special at all put on the broadcast? Was a participant that came from the other side of the world that charming?

As he was thinking that, there were stealthy stares looking at him. The participants glanced time by time and conversed between them. Jo Minjoon barely endured letting out a sigh. He didn't have that much of a skill, but they pointlessly made him attract more attention.

However, just by showing his face on a broadcast was reason enough to attract attention. Because, from all those participants, the casting director chose to put him on the broadcast. Just by not making any remarkable mistakes, the probabilities of Jo Minjoon to survive got higher. But.....

“Minjoon! You didn’t appear for a little while but they properly showed you! I also wanted to appear....”

Marco was looking at Jo Minjoon with really envious eyes. Looking at his eyes, he felt that all of his complications disappeared. Jo Minjoon smiled and said.

“Now that I think about it, I also wanted to appear in TV screen at least once, it seems that one of my wishes came true.”

“Ugh..... I will also appear in it.”

It was at that moment when he was looking at the resolved Marco making a smile. Jo Minjoon’s eyes contacted with Anderson’s that was looking at them. And at that moment, he frowned. The look Anderson was giving him wasn’t kind at all. It wasn’t a particularly hostile look. However, that menacing look got to Jo Minjoon’s nerves.

‘Is it my unconsciousness?’

He didn’t particularly clash with Anderson, so there was no reason for him to hate him that much. But he didn’t really like the look he was giving him. Jo Minjoon’s gaze grew sharp. Anderson turned his attention to the TV. It was really funny to tell him something because of a moment’s look. So the only thing Jo Minjoon could do was looking at the TV like Anderson.

And at that moment, Jo Minjoon started to concentrate without

blinking. What showed on the screen was Kaya. A scene where she was helping her mother selling fruits in the market could be seen for a moment, and then it showed Kaya's image when cooking. It was her grilled eel.

Looking at the grilling eel covered with oil and soy sauce was spectacular even though he had already seen it before. Jo Minjoon could confidently say that the eel's body was more beautiful than the Niagara Waterfall. And it was the same for all of the participants.

Everyone looked at her cooking dumbfoundedly. Those were people who knew how to criticize a dish. They could vaguely taste the flavor just by looking at the preparations of the dish. And they could even notice Kaya's ability. To perfectly grill an eel at the age of 18 was something impossible without having been born with ability.

Similar as before, but a somewhat different atmosphere could be sensed from the participants. It was sure that they were alert of Kaya. It was an ability and skills that made you do so. But at the same time, they were feeling their body weak as never before. To be only 18 and have that kind of skill. On top of that, she didn't even receive elite training.....

Her ability was one that made other people want to have it and feel jealousy to just be watching it. It was an ability they never had before but, they all felt a sense of loss. Jo Minjoon understood those participants. Because even he, the first time he saw Kaya's video, felt admiration and jealousy.

Jo Minjoon suddenly turned to look at Marco's expression but he let out a laugh unconsciously. Marco didn't seem to have an interest in Kaya's skills. It was as if he wanted to eat the eel on the screen, but he was observing with his mouth wide opened. He was rather timid, but he wasn't normal either. Jo Minjoon didn't hate Marco.

"Do you want to eat it?"

".....Huh, what? What did you say?"

"If you want to eat it. That eel."

"Of course. If I could leave delicious food my body wouldn't have become like this."

Marco talked like that and patted his belly. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"Sometimes, we would also be able to do that. That dish. That sense of taste. The day will come when we get those."

"Maybe we already have them."

At Marco's answer, Jo Minjoon looked dumbfoundedly at him. When their gazes met, it was as if Marco got frightened but replied without confidence.

"Ah, no.... I heard that saying on TV. It's not that the sense of taste appears, but the forgotten sense reappears. And the asleep sense of taste revives instead of your skill getting better..... Gosh, I don't even know what I'm saying. Leave it at that. Just forget it."

".....No. Those were good words."

Jo Minjoon replied like that and he looked at the screen again. The praises of the judges were pouring from the judges.

-This..... I'm surprised. This is the best dish I have tried in New York. No, the best I have eaten in this season.

-For someone that isn't even in her twenties to skillfully grill eel like this isn't a normal person. It seems that you were gifted with many skills by god.

It was a compliment that wasn't even surprising. The participants looked at the TV. Jo Minjoon turned his head to look at Kaya. She was leaning on a wall of the hall and was watching the TV with a look you couldn't know what she was thinking about. No, she was almost staring. Kaya looked back at Jo Minjoon. She had always been able to sense the sights directed at her like a ghost. Kaya made words with her lips. He was now quite accustomed to that word. 'What are you looking at?'

Jo Minjoon too replied that way. Saying the truth, it didn't have any meaning. So Kaya must have had a headache trying to interpret what his lips had said. He thought it was a childish revenge and was at that moment he turned to look at the TV again. Jo Minjoon was being shown on the screen. Jo Minjoon's face became slightly contorted. Why in the world did he appear on Kaya's scene? The question didn't last long. The Jo Minjoon inside the screen opened his mouth and said.

- She's the best participant from those who has come today. The best from all the ones I've seen. And maybe, she will be the best from this competition.

- Saying that she will be the best from this competition means that you think that she's going to win?

At the question of the PD Martin, Jo Minjoon replied.

- It will be so if there are no upsets.

## Chapter 21: Comprehension Towards The Broadcast (3)

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“.....Uh, hm. Those were some unconventional words.”

Marco whispered in a low voice. What Marco said was what all the other participants agreed with. Because saying that Kaya was going to win was the same as saying that all the others were going to get disqualified.

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. He felt as if he had just said something he shouldn't, and he thought that if there was any need to insert a scene like that. However he could also understand. Making that kind of genius more popular in that way, in the perspective of the viewers, it was funnier and more serious.

Probably, Martin didn't even take into account that what Jo Minjoon had just said, could bother the other participants that watched the broadcast. No, there was a high probability that he couldn't think about it.

Either way, there was no point in discuss it, now that the situation turned out like this. The really important thing was the stares directed at him. Not everyone was looking at him but, most of them that had a light attitude, sent not too amiable gazes.

He felt sour. Jo Minjoon averted his sight to not make eye contact with anyone. But from all of the places he could look, he had to look at Kaya. She was glaring at him as if she didn't like him. Jo Minjoon felt all the more depressed. If he had a sin, it was



just that he praised her, but for even her to be like that...

But he wasn't in a situation where he could question that. With Jo Minjoon's sentence, the first episode ended. It was an ending that showed Kaya's genius skills, but in the hall, only a quiet atmosphere remained.

‘Am I going to get bullied?’

For a foreigner to say that early on, there was no way they would view him favorably. At least Marco, who was next to him, wouldn't hate him but.....

The participants that were gathered in the hall started to get up and leave the place. And Jo Minjoon could hear some discontent voices from those who had left. Jo Minjoon was letting a sigh when someone got in front of him. Jo Minjoon lifted his head. He was handsome and had noble blond hair. It was Anderson. He said with a displeased voice.

“I'm curious. If you have the skills to judge all of us.”

As Jo Minjoon couldn't reply anything back and was just looking at him, Anderson whispered to Jo Minjoon's ear.

“I'm begging you, but please don't make something trashy. Because I'm going to get angry.”

After saying that, Anderson left. Marco didn't know what to do

and just patted Jo Minjoon's shoulders.

“Don, don't mind. They will soon forget it.”

“I wonder. I don't think I'm going to.”

The one who replied to Marco wasn't Jo Minjoon. It was Kaya. She was glaring at Jo Minjoon with her displeased face. Kaya opened her mouth.

“What are you?”

“.....What do you mean? I'm a participant.”

“No, I'm not talking about that. Why are you suddenly using another's name and claiming that I'll win? Because of you only I got bad mouthed.”

It was understandable for her to say that. They all admitted Kaya's ability, but they didn't publicize it. However, Jo Minjoon's interview became that switch. The winner candidate that possesses frightening abilities, Kaya Lotus. That concept became established in just a moment.

Kaya couldn't help but feel bothered. It wasn't even her mistake while talking, but she became like that with another's interview. Jo Minjoon, usually treated her favorably, but that was that and this was this. Facing Kaya's ferocious glare, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I'm sorry.”

“.....Why don't you just act presumptuously with a hard face?

That way I can curse you all I want.”

“If you want to curse me, you can. Because today I put you in a really bad situation.”

At what he said, Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon for a long while, and in the end let out a deep sigh.

“Enough. Even if I did that, I would only become the bad girl. Now I can’t even get angry in this situation.”

“.....Aside from that, I’m saying this right now, but what I said at the interview was the truth. You are going to win this season. If there aren’t any upsets.”

Jo Minjoon’s words were filled with affirmation. Because he wasn’t predicting but, already knew the truth, it was obvious. Jo Minjoon knew the future. The future where all the participants get disqualified. That none of the participants right now can beat Kaya.

However.

“And I plan to become that upset.”

However Jo Minjoon didn’t lose to her yet. His cooking level wasn’t a problem. There wasn’t a need for him to be afraid of her. Because they didn’t face each other yet.

Because it was like that, Jo Minjoon was the only participant who could face Kaya. He believed that. He wanted to believe like that.

He didn't want to cook already thinking that he was going to lose in the upcoming fights. He wanted to hold the hope that it was all for the sake of winning, and fought believing in his cooking. Jo Minjoon wanted to do so. No, he had to.

“Do as you wish. Be an upset or not.”

Kaya talked like that, and left the hall grumbling. Jo Minjoon just looked at the back of Kaya leaving. Looking at those two arguing like that, Marco went towards Jo Minjoon and poked him with his index finger and asked.

“Lovers quarrel?”

“.....It's nothing like that.”

—

(Chat)

TinyJung : Did you see Grand Chef? I think I saw that girl Kaya somewhere.

└ Abdul N : They say she works in the market. Maybe you saw her once while on the market. Also, she looks like there was at least one girl in college similar to her. Isn't that right?

Cersei Lannister : I don't like Tirion from the participants. He looks like I want to pick on him.

└ George Margin : He looked fine to me.

└ Eve rose : Talking about not liking someone. There was also

that girl Kaya. When I kept looking at the screen I got more and more scared.

└ Devy Jones : @Eve Rose She must just be wary of her surroundings. Won't you get nervous getting on air at a young age?

Golden Rosemary : I'm not that interested in cooking so I can't say much, but in my opinion, that korean did the best. I wonder why people just talk about that Kaya.

└ Christine R : Just looking at the appearance seems like Minjoon made the best dish. The one who made the most difficult dish was Kaya with her grilled eel. I didn't know there would be a teen cooking with a grill on that level.

Evil Empire : Shout! Kaya! That guy Minjoon said something good. I will also say some words. Anyways, the winner is Kaya.

└ Troll Trull : You can't know that on a short period of time... But only this once I'll agree. Aside from her skills,I want to see Kaya winning. I want to become her fan. No, maybe I already am?

Taylor Love : Minjoon's bream is certainly charming. Chloe's kuobarou was also good. But I wonder about the eel.... Because I haven't eaten it even once. I'm not attracted to it. What I want to eat the most is Minjoon's cooking. Aside from cooking, he's sexy.

Jo Minjoon read all the articles left on the SNS(Social Network Service). As soon as the broadcast ended, many articles related to Grand Chef were being posted. At times, a smile could be seen from him, but at others, he frowned. But after some time, Jo Minjoon's face became expressionless.

To react at each one, there were just too many to do so. There

were just too many for him to get happy or sad. At times, there were criticisms without reason, no, they were curses. And there were viewers that showed unexpected affection. At times korean-americans, and at times, native koreans referred to him.

Erina Choi: Personally, saying that Kaya is already the winner was rushing it. Her dish was excellent, but to already conclude like that was not good. Is he saying that he is not confident or doesn't have the courage to win?

└ Helena Vodianova : I agree. It may be the work of the editing, but he didn't look confident.

At this point, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but to accept it. That what he said at that time was a mistake. Was it because he already knew the future and said that? No, perhaps that was merely boasting. Just as someone who boasts about his great father, was it that he wanted to boast about Kaya winning as her fan? Because Jo Minjoon was a fan of the chef Kaya. Because he wanted to become like her. It could be said that he was pleased by her skills and accomplishments. However.

This was a time he couldn't let it end by just being pleased. He couldn't misunderstand Kaya's greatness as his. Because he was also standing in the same stage as her. To not fall behind, he had to have the resolution to surpass her. He couldn't just become part of the audience who just looked at her abilities and her cooking. He wanted to grab pens in the same field as her. He wanted to do so.

To claim that Kaya was going to win was indeed rushing things. He couldn't think it through. It could be said that he was thinking things through but, the end result was this. And only then, could

Jo Minjoon realize that this wasn't a school, nor the kitchen the thirty years old Jo Minjoon used to work. This was Grand Chef. A broadcast. It was a place where everybody would remember a word he said.

It wasn't that the strength had left him. It was regret for saying something like that at that time. If he was a participant he couldn't just casually say that the winner was already decided. That was something only the audience could say. And Jo Minjoon wasn't a viewer right now.

There could no longer be defeats. Jo Minjoon's gaze grew sharp. Jo Minjoon wrote an article. Of course, through a nickname.

Cooking Man: A chef should only talk through with his dishes.

## Chapter 22: Three Dishes And One Meal (1)

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“The mission this time will be a team one.”

The participant's whispering voices could be heard at Joseph's voice that reverberated through the room. Jo Minjoon shut his mouth and listened at Joseph's voice. He knew that it was going to be a team mission. And he even knew the theme.

“The theme is simple. Make a three person team. You will have to cook an appetizer, main dish and dessert. Assign among yourselves what you are going to cook. You need to cook according to your specializations but remember. This is a team mission.”

Course meal. Although it was the simplest 3 course. But the point of having to balance the overall of the three dishes was going to be really hard.

And if you have to cook with people you have never worked together with, then even more so. Jo Minjoon tched. For it to be a team mission just after he got out of a doghouse. He already knew it but it wasn't that good of a situation.

“You will have to decide the teammates for yourselves. But there is something you should remember. The role you should take on should be only one. I recommend you making the teams according to the division of the roles.”

Just as Joseph finished speaking, the participants looked at each other. The first one he looked for was Marco. He didn't show it yet,



but Marco's bakery level was 7. If he were to make dessert, then he would probably make it better than anyone else.

He was thinking like that and approaching Marco when, next to Marco was already another person. And looking at that person's face, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but get surprised. An unexpected person was standing there. Chloe Jung.

“Ah, Minjoon!”

Marco smiled brightly and called for Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon started to walk slowly. As he glanced at Chloe, Marco opened his mouth.

“You saw yesterday's broadcast right? This is Chloe Jung. Chloe, this is Jo Minjoon.”

“Hello. Mr. famous.”

“.....Hello.”

At Chloe's greetings, Jo Minjoon replied with an awkward face. Marco smiled and opened his mouth.

“I was just talking with Chloe about the team. Minjoon, what about you? I would like to team up with you.”

“It's fine for me but....”

Jo Minjoon said that and looked at Chloe. She said while smiling.

“I’m also fine. I saw you cooking the bream on yesterday’s broadcast. It was quite fun.”

“If you saw it like that, then thank you. Your cooking was also good. Tangsuyuk.”

Chloe smiled brightly without saying anything. Even though she saw yesterday’s broadcast, she didn’t want to prejudice him, so Jo Minjoon too, became calmer. Chloe said with a soft voice.

“Then, are we a team?”

“I suppose so. Have you thought of the part you want to take care of? I hope that our ideas don’t overlap.”

Jo Minjoon said that and looked at Marco. Saying the truth, it was obvious what Marco was going to choose. His baking level was a whoopping level 7. It was a level you couldn’t achieve without hard work and dedication. And indeed, Marco said what he was expecting to.

“I want to be in charge of the dessert. It’s my specialty making bread or cakes.”

“Okay. Minjoon, what about you?”

“I would like to make the appetizer.”

“Then I’m in charge of the main dish.”

“Is that what you wanted?”

“I can do both appetizer and main dish. It only doesn’t have to be dessert.”

Listening to Chloe, Jo Minjoon looked at his surroundings. Kaya could be seen. She was in the middle of conversing with Anderson. Were they going to team up here? He didn't remember well. Jo Minjoon turned his head. It wasn't the time to pay attention to them.

“What theme are we going with?”

“Well..... it's rather difficult now that there are only 3 courses.”

Jo Minjoon emphasized with her. It was more comfortable to follow precise directions. It was quite a difficult job to take into account the harmony of the three dishes and configure the menu accordingly.

‘If my cooking level goes up, would I be able to see the course's arrangement level?’

He couldn't know. But in the first place, he wondered if he would even need the system's counseling when he reached level 8 on cooking. But of course, to reach that level you would need experience and hard work that couldn't even be compared to right now. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“As I see it, I think it would be better to go with quality rather than flashiness. It isn't the time to be adventuring right now.”

“Mm, I also think so.”

“First, let's go to the pantry.”

While they were leaving to the pantry, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“What are you planning to make for the main dish?”

According on how was the main dish, the appetizer and the dessert couldn't help but change according to it. Chloe thought for a while and replied soon.

“I want to go with pan-fried scallops(어항 관자).”

Pan-fried Scallops. It was a dish where scallops replaced meat. It was a bit different to what he had thought, but he didn't oppose to it. He could only believe on Chloe's cooking skills.

Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon.

“What are you going to make for the appetizer?”

“Soft fried tofu. Will it suit before presenting the scallops?”

“Mm. I think it will be good. What about you Marco?”

At Chloe's question, Marco seemed to be baffled. Seeing that he was rolling his eyes seemed like he had many things to choose from. After a while Marco opened his mouth and replied.

“Mocha biscuit. I was thinking about putting some whipping cream on top... but would that be too heavy?”

“Yeah, it's a bit heavy. Wouldn't plain yogurt or something of the sort be better than whipping cream? To have a simpler flavor. With a refreshing flavor.”

“Okay. I’ll do so.”

Marco laughed sophisticatedly and nodded. Chloe clapped lightly and said.

“Now, we finished arranging the menu... now the only thing left is cooking.”

—

“How did you end up talking with Chloe?”

“It’s nothing special or the sort. As she was told to make a team, she came to me first.”

“Yeah? Hmm.”

Jo Minjoon was talking in a low voice with Marco in front of the countertop. It was nice to meet Chloe, who had appeared so suddenly and at the same time, it was unexpected. Because they didn’t have any contact before. Well, there would be nothing weird to say that it was a coincidence. There were only 27 participants, and for Chloe to approach Marco was nothing special.

It was just unexpected. For one of the three participants with the highest cooking level to team up with the two of them. Originally, who would she have picked for her team? He couldn’t help but think that. However, he didn’t remember. Chloe, in the past Grand Chef, wasn’t a participant who got too much attention.

“By the way, they got really picky with the rules.”

Before they started cooking, the judges explained the rules. The participants were only allowed to work in their own dishes. Saying the truth, this team mission was close to being masked as an individual mission.

Currently, there were three countertops placed in the room. It was unavoidable because there were nine teams. It was a method that judged three teams at a time. And during that time, the remaining six teams had to get to the second floor and observe the other team's cooking.

Jo Minjoon's team was the first. He didn't know if he was fortunate or not. He personally thought that it was better. Because he wouldn't have to get nervous watching at the other teams cooking.

Jo Minjoon glanced at the table next to them. Kaya and Anderson were standing still and preparing for cooking. Remembering the scene of Kaya getting mad at him, only made him feel sour.

‘Let's concentrate on cooking.’

Jo Minjoon brought up the recipe for the soft fried tofu in his head. [The estimated cooking score is 7.] The recipe was perfect. At least, it was at Jo Minjoon's level. It was also a dish he had made many times before. He personally liked tofu the most, and liked soft tofu secondly. The first one was tofu in kimchi jjigae(김치찌개), that was sitting for a day.

Saying the truth, it was a dish that couldn't be easily made at

home. If you oiled a pan thinly and put the soft tofu, it's flavor wouldn't be properly brought up. After squeezing the moisture of the tofu, you smeared it on dough, and when put in hot oil, the colour became whiter and it looked better.

But in this place, he could use however much oil he wanted to. Thinking that he would be able to properly cook got him flustered up without concerning the test.

Jo Minjoon looked at the judges mouths. One of them started to slowly open his mouth. It was Joseph.

“Start your cooking!”

## Chapter 23: Three Dishes And One Meal (2)

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The first thing Jo Minjoon grabbed was the cooking oil. He poured a lot of it in the pot and turned on the fire. Bringing up the heat of the oil wasn't something that was done in an instant. You had to prepare it beforehand, and that was also true for water. Jo Minjoon put another pot next to the oiled one, put some kelp and turned on the fire.

There were four gas burners on the countertop, and Jo Minjoon was responsible for two of these. The other two were for Chloe. And for Marco didn't need a burner.

While heating the water and oil, Jo Minjoon prepared the soft tofu quickly. He wouldn't be late if he prepared the soy sauce and the vegetables later. If it was an ingredient that needed to be fermented, then that was another story. But for soft tofu, it was more important for it to have a neat flavor.

The size of the tofu wasn't big. In the first place, it wasn't good to have a big amount in an appetizer menu. Precisely speaking it wasn't good for the overall course of the menu.

People have a tendency to see the restaurant's dish amount and are reluctant to spend money on it. Jo Minjoon could understand them. Because, a restaurant's price was as much as five times the normal price. But the amount of food in the plate was the size of a fist, no, the size of a thumb, so it wasn't rare for people to complain about it. 'Aren't they saving too much ingredients?' He thought.



But the restaurants didn't put a small amount on the plate to save ingredient fees. Regret. That regret was the work of the flavor. And if you put a big amount of food, or ate many times the same food, feeling the same impression as the first time was difficult. Dishes with small amounts of food looked to impress the customers.

‘I'll make it a bite size.’

The knife sliced the tofu softly. The flavor and the regret came only with the size of a bite. There were even restaurants that served the steak already chopped in the size of a bite.

He put the sliced tofus on top of the cotton cloth. For the soon to fry tofu to still have moisture was a great mistake. And when you buried the tofu in the dough, it had a high possibility to break. It was a must to remove the moisture of the tofu.

At the same time, it was a quite a pain of a job. If you put it over a dry cloth, the surface of the tofu would stick to it. And if you did it with a wet cloth, the moisture didn't absorb well. He had to use a not too dry nor a wet cloth like he was doing right now. That was the best method for the soft tofu not to turn bad and remove the moisture.

Jo Minjoon grabbed the kitchen towel and covered the soft tofu with it. And after taking a breath, looked at his surroundings. Marco was making dough for the biscuit for quite a while, and Chloe was putting the sliced scallops in the steamer.

He wanted to look at Kaya's table, but he purposely endured. It

wasn't the time to pay attention to another's cooking. Jo Minjoon, immediately grabbed the soy. Saying the truth, soft fried tofu was from Japanese cuisine. [Agedashi tofu](#)(揚げ出し豆腐). What Jo Minjoon was making right now was an improved version of that agedashi tofu. Actually, saying that it was improved was a bit embarrassing. Because he was just using the agedashi tofu as the base and slightly changed the sauce.

Jo Minjoon turned off the boiling water and put the [katsuobushi](#). So far, there was nothing different with the normal sauce recipe. Even putting filtered gravy in the sieve and putting a spoon of soy was the same. However, that was where Jo Minjoon's change was. Lime juice. It wasn't too much. The amount was so low as to make one wonder if it would fill a spoon. But that lime juice would revive the sour flavor of the agedashi tofu.

And after that, it was entirely facing victory. Jo Minjoon looked at the soft tofu sharply. The cotton cloth and the kitchen towel were already wet. It also meant that the moisture of the soft tofu got out. Jo Minjoon, after pouring starch, slowly put down the soft tofu on top. It was quite a sensitive situation. If he put a little bit of strength, the tofu would break entirely.

Fortunately, he succeeded putting it on top of the starch, but it was too early to feel relieved. Jo Minjoon even held his breath and rolled a soft tofu the size of a dice on the starch. If it was left even a little longer the starch's stickiness and the moisture left on the tofu could break it.

Was it luck? Or was it his delicate touch? The soft tofu didn't break and could safely wear the starch coat. Jo Minjoon caught his

breath and looked at the boiling oil. The soft tofus that were being fried in the oil seemed rather cute. He wondered that he would get this feeling when looking at a newborn.

When it got a white colour, Jo Minjoon, quickly took out the soft tofu out of the oil. A voice could be heard next to him.

“Minjoon! You are doing fine, right?”

“Don’t worry. It’s perfect.”

Jo Minjoon replied simply at Marco’s question. Looking at the white fry made him satisfied. While the soft tofu was removing the oil, Jo Minjoon prepared the vegetables. For now, it was the radish. He started to grate it with the grater and put it in the soy sauce, and then sliced the green onions. That was the end.

Jo Minjoon silently observed at Marco and Chloe. He wanted to help them, but couldn’t because of the rules. Jo Minjoon endured wanting to help them and observed the cooking of the both. Now that he thought about it, it has been a while since he observed someone cooking like this. When he was working at the restaurant as the youngest, he only cut ingredients in a corner, he couldn’t see someone handling the pan that much.

Marco put the biscuit dough in the oven, and now was preparing the yogurt ice cream to put over it. Saying the truth, it wasn’t fun watching all of the baking processes.

That was the reason Jo Minjoon started to observe Chloe. She was shaking the scallions, vegetables and a red sauce in the wok. At

times, flames arose. On the countertop, there were a total of nine dishes being cooked, but Chloe's pan fried scallions aroma was particularly strong.

‘Perhaps it would be able to get 8 points.’

It wasn't impossible getting that kind of thought. At least, it's appearance and the aroma seemed almost perfect.

And after some time passed, Jo Minjoon could tell that he wasn't wrong. Jo Minjoon looked with a face that had nothing more to admire at Chloe's dish.

[Pan fried scallions]

Freshness: 92%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 8/10

It was the first time he had seen an 8 point dish after Kaya's grilled eel. Jo Minjoon could feel his mouth watering. Even admiration voices could be heard from the participants on the 2nd floor. He, who was observing right next to Chloe, could tell that it was no ordinary dish. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Don't you need to taste it?”

“I don't..... Do you want to eat?”

Chloe looked mockingly. Jo Minjoon couldn't even feel that he was being mocked and nodded. That was just how charming her dish was. Chloe used chopsticks to put a scallop and [bok choy](#) in a steel spoon. And then held it out to Jo Minjoon.

It's appearance was perfect. The scallop that was fried with a red chilli oil could be seen that it had knife marks on it, and the green colour of the bok choy seemed to make the scallops fierceness more humble.

And even after it entered his mouth, it was the same. From the spaces between the knife markings on the scallion, could be seen some oyster sauce and chili oil and it's flavor was tasty and heavy. Usually Jo Minjoon didn't like the combination of salty and sweet flavor. But even he couldn't help but be amazed. The scallops had a sea aroma left, but it was suitable. It didn't smell fishy and it contained a beautiful flavor inside it.

And the bok choy wasn't placed just because so. The leaves stimulated a soft feeling to the tongue, and each time he chewed the crunchy stem, the unique and clean juice flowed out and washed his mouth. The strong flavor of the pan fried scallops was being eased with just one bok choy leaf. It even made him amazed.

So at the same time, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but be surprised. If she had lost to Kaya it was understandable. But when there were at least 10 participants left and the winner was almost confirmed, Chloe wasn't on that place in Jo Minjoon's memories.

‘What could have happened.....?’

It was a problem he didn't have to think right now. Even if he thought about it he wouldn't get any answers. So Jo Minjoon turned his head to look at the soft tofu. For now, the oil should have drained. The given time was almost over. He had to start moving the soft tofu to the sauce.

Soft fried tofu. Precisely speaking, while finishing the agedashi tofu, Jo Minjoon felt something he didn't know. At first, he thought it was the scallop he had eaten, but it wasn't. And that feeling soon appeared before him.

[Agedashi Tofu]

Freshness: 90%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High(Average ingredients)

Cooking Score: 7/10

7 points. Usually, he thought that it was good enough. He thought that it was a relatively safe score. However looking at that score, he didn't feel as satisfied as usual. He remembered Kaya's eel. And also remembered the scallop he had just eaten.

Jo Minjoon lifted a spoon and put a soft fried tofu in his mouth. It was good. The feeling of it touching the tongue, the oily flavor of the fried coat, and beyond that was the bland flavor of the tofu. However, he wasn't satisfied.

Was the flavor lacking? Or could it be because of the score before him.

If he didn't see the score, would he be satisfied?

## Chapter 24: Three Dishes And One Meal (3)

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“Time is over. Hands off the plate!”

Alan shouted sharply. Jo Minjoon looked calmly at Alan. Alan looked at all 9 participants and said.

“I’ll evaluate each team separately. Chloe, Minjoon, Marco. Bring your dish over here.”

Jo Minjoon grabbed the plate that contained the soft fried tofu and walked to where Alan was. The three plates were placed. Emily looked at the dishes and confusedly, opened her mouth.

“A japanese fried tofu, along with chinese fried scallops and on top of that, biscuits.... It feels as if various cultures are mixed. But would they suit each other?”

The one who replied to that was Chloe. She had a smile that anyone who looked at her would have a good impression towards her, and said.

“I think it will. Just like our team. We are all from different cultures but are harmonious.”

“I hope so.”

After finishing her words, Emily split the tofu. The fried coating was stuck to the tofu, so even while splitting it, it didn’t seem like it will crumble. With just that, Emily seemed half satisfied. At



least, she was with the tofu.

The spoon was filled with the soy sauce, and on top of that was placed the soft fried tofu. Emily, with an elegant snap, put the tofu in her mouth.

While chewing it, Emily could know. That it was well made. She didn't feel even a little bit of oil from the tofu juices. The soy sauce felt lighter because of the lime juice, and even while eating the tofu, she felt like she was eating salad.

It was a great appetizer. At least, it was if it was an amateur that had made it. Emily savored the tofu. Saying the truth, if you made tofu well, it would be delicious. But bringing it flavor wasn't an easy task.

With that meaning, there were no points to correct Jo Minjoon's agedashi tofu. It wasn't anything special, but it's flavor was faithful to the basics. Emily evaluated like that.

And that was the same thinking Joseph and Alan had. They felt unease because lime juice was put in it, but because it was used moderately, it didn't worsen the flavor, but became it's aroma.

Joseph started to think the thing he had thought many times before. That Jo Minjoon was a genius regarding on making the concept of the recipes. But it couldn't be called outstanding. However, when transforming a recipe, there were times that it worsened or became better. However Jo Minjoon kept the basic flavor of the dish and made it better.

‘Could it be that at this young age he understood the construction of flavor?’

It wasn’t weird for Joseph to think like that. Joseph, wondering, opened his mouth.

“Minjoon. Who thought of putting in lime juice?”

“It’s something I came up with myself.”

“And you have actually tried it?”

“.....Yes. Is that weird?”

Joseph didn’t reply and kept his mouth shut. It didn’t look like Jo Minjoon was lying. It meant that he did come up with that idea. And the same could be said for all of the dishes he had made before.

For him to be able to do that, he would have cooked a lot. But was that something possible? He was only in his early twenties. Even if he lived in the kitchen, it was difficult to cook that way.

Joseph, who didn’t know about the system’s help, could obviously question that. However, he couldn’t just keep thinking about it. Right at this moment, the food was getting cold, and Emily and Alan had already put a scallop in their mouths.

He couldn’t do anything about it and ate a scallop. It was delicious. Basically, it’s already a delicious dish. But the soy sauce’s softness and clean flavor felt all the more delicious after going

through the throat. Their tongues, that were more sensitive than usual, could sense clearly the salty and sweet flavor of the chili oil and oyster sauce, and the softness of the scallop seemed to kiss his tongue.

It was a beautiful flavor. And it was harmonious. Joseph calmed himself and savored the flavor left in his mouth. Even after he became one of the best chefs in the world, his heart remained a pure one. What brought him to become a chef, to eat something delicious, and to want to make it.

That's why Joseph couldn't help but be moved by the scallops. And Emily and Alan were the same. Of course, there were some differences among them but, their impressions were softer than usual.

The last thing was the mocha biscuit. What was placed on top of the square mocha biscuit was a slightly frosted plain yogurt like a round marble ball. The mocha biscuit entered their mouths. The crunchiness, along with the spreading coffee aroma and the sour flavor of the yogurt made the mouth feel good.

It was a dish you couldn't make without understanding the role of desserts. Even if the judges tried to be expressionless, they couldn't help but leak a smile. Because delicious things made people smile.

Jo Minjoon looked at the smile of the judges. And he felt relieved. Marco's mocha biscuit was 7 points. Thinking about Marco's level 7 in bakery, although it wasn't a failure, you couldn't help but feel a little uneasy. Aside of the cooking score, he didn't have

confidence in the harmony of the dishes.

The tasting continued. The judges went towards Kaya's team course meal. Kaya was in charge of the appetizer. It was a salmon tataki that only the exterior was roasted along with a salad with sour sauce. Jo Minjoon frowned.

[Salmon tataki salad]

Freshness: 92%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 8/10

8 points. It was an excellent dish like Kaya. However Jo Minjoon couldn't have a good impression towards that dish. And the judges would also be like that.

".....Is that the appetizer?"

"Yes."

"Rather than appetizer it is more of an entree. It's too heavy. I feel like that just by watching it."

Alan was expressing exactly what Jo Minjoon was thinking. Precisely speaking, it was what everyone was thinking. Perhaps, it would be better if she had made salmon sushi. But for it to be a hot tataki. That was too heavy for it to be an appetizer.

Kaya looked at Alan without saying anything. In the end,

Anderson couldn't endure anymore and opened his mouth.

"I'm sorry. Actually....."

"Enough. I heard from the director. You fought for the spot of the main dish? It's good for you to fight. But do you have to influence the dish because of that?"

Alan was looking at Anderson, but his words were also directed at Kaya. Kaya frowned a little and glared at Alan. She said with her low and husky voice.

"At least eat it. It will be delicious."

When listening to Kaya's angry voice, only then could Jo Minjoon understand the situation. When the winner candidates Anderson and Kaya formed a team, the results were disaster. The reason was simple. The dessert was in charge another participant but, Anderson and Kaya were arguing about who would be cooking the main dish.

The results of that was Anderson making the main dish. But after that, Kaya's dish was the problem. She made the same salmon tataki as an appetizer. You couldn't know if it was because she lacked understanding about appetizers, or because she felt resentment towards Anderson.

But the results were what was showing right now.

"I can't eat this dish. I think that the other judges are thinking

the same thing as me.”

Alan talked like that and looked at Emily and Joseph. The both of them were silent and just nodded. Joseph said lamenting.

“Kaya, why did you cook this dish? You are someone who understands cooking. And that also means that you understand the fun of eating. This..... I can’t say that this is the entirety. I can’t even judge the taste. Rather than disappointment, it is despair. How could this.....”

Joseph couldn’t even end what he was saying and let out a sigh. Jo Minjoon just looked at that sight. Those were some really harsh words to say in front of an 8 point dish, but Jo Minjoon understood them. It was just like Joseph had said. That dish got diverted from the theme. It didn’t have consideration for the one eating it, nor was made sincerely. It was a dish filled with selfishness, and rage because the main dish was taken.

And only then could Jo Minjoon understand. Even if Kaya was a genius, she was still an 18 year old girl. That she was still an ugly duck that had yet to grow to become a swan.\* She was still a girl who couldn’t even control her own emotions.

Silence filled the room. Jo Minjoon just stared at the salmon tataki salad Kaya had made. 8 points. A dish that was difficult to let it go. But at the same time, a dish that no one could place a hand on.

This.....

## Chapter 25: Three Dishes And One Meal (4)

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It wasn't a proper dish.

Jo Minjoon thought like that. Even if a lot of skill was used in it, it was something that should never have been in a plate. A dish that was filled with the chef's resentment, even if it's score was high it wasn't worth anything.

“We won't eat this. Go back to your places.”

Alan said determined. It wasn't only directed to Kaya, but to the whole team. Anderson was holding the dish with a clear angry face. Kaya bit her lips and went towards her dish.

And then ate her salmon. At that sight, nobody could tell her something and just looked at her. Kaya, after chewing it, gulped it. Then opened her mouth. She seemed calm, but her voice was trembling.

“But it's delicious.”

The meaning it held was just that. She took her plate and turned back. The sight of her biting her lips, to Jo Minjoon somehow seemed that she was trying not to shed tears.

However Kaya didn't have any rights to cry. Jo Minjoon thought. When a chef prioritizes her emotions and pride instead of the customer, you couldn't describe what was put on the dish with any

words.

The basics of course cooking was in the harmony. The appetizer had the role to show up the main dish and to appetize one's mouth. However, Kaya's selfishness didn't simply end at appetizing. Because it was her selfishness that made her cook the salmon tataki. It wasn't a course cooking dish, but an absolutely individual dish.

But that was not having consideration toward the customer. Even if she knew it or not, it wasn't something to just let it pass.

The judges started to evaluate the dishes as if nothing had happened. After showing an expressionless face, they went up back to the stage. But the evaluation didn't start right now. Only after the six teams that couldn't show off their dishes showed theirs, Alan opened his mouth.

“Chloe. Minjoon. Marco. Come to the front.”

As the three of them came up, only then did Alan open his mouth. It was an expressionless and hard face as always.

“The flavor was okay. It could be seen that you chose the menu considering that it was a course meal. Scallops after tofu, and then biscuits. It was a menu that didn't seem to suit each other, but unexpectedly, the flavor left on the mouth was good.”

“Thank you.”



Chloe and Minjoon almost simultaneously opened their mouths. And Marco glanced sideways and opened his mouth late. “Tha, thank you.” Joseph, who was looking at Marco, opened his mouth.

“Perhaps, the one who showed the most potential on this dish was you, Marco. Chefs tend to put something more to their dishes and to make it more splendid. However, your mocha biscuit didn’t have any excessive flavor. It was a flavor that covered the scallop’s and the tofu’s flavor. Also, the biscuit dough was perfect. You put in a deep and refined flavor and aroma in a simple dish. Thank you.”

“Ah, thank you.”

Marco replied while sniffing. Jo Minjoon glanced a little and saw that Marco’s eyes were teary. He was a tender child unlike his hog like appearance. Jo Minjoon lifted his hand and patted Marco’s back.

Emily smiled and opened her mouth.

“I also ate it deliciously. Aside from the dishes, I think it was good to see you being nice to each other. I think you showed how a chef has to act when they form a team.”

“You did well. Go to the 2nd floor! You passed.”

They should have already expected that they had passed with what they were being told, but as soon as Alan finished what he was saying, Chloe let a happy scream and held Marco and Jo Minjoon. Of course, to wrap Marco’s big body, her arms were not enough. In the end, Marco and Jo Minjoon had to receive her

putting their arms around their shoulders while jumping.

Jo Minjoon smiled awkwardly. He knew that it was an attitude to have after passing, but to be this cheerful. As he didn't jump and was only smiling, Chloe's face reddened and shook off her apron.

However, that cheerful time didn't last long. Because next, was Kaya's evaluation. Alan said coldly. It was a voice that his rage could clearly be felt.

"Personally, I put my expectations too high for this team. And the disappointment is also that big. I think that there's no meaning to fight over the main's seat. But well, let's get over that. Because anyone would want to be the protagonist. But what comes next sucks even more. I think that there's no need for you to ask about it."

Nobody replied. Joseph let out a sigh and said.

"A dish contains a chef's heart. Kaya. Your dish didn't contain a will towards the customer. Do you agree?"

".....Yes."

Kaya replied hesitatingly. She seemed just like a child being lectured by a teacher. Emily opened her mouth. Her attitude was sharp and harsh unlike usual.

"We didn't test your dishes. Because it's something we can't eat. So obviously, you are disqualified. Go back to your place."

“.....I have an objection.”

The one who opened his mouth was Anderson. Emily frowned as she looked at him. Anderson continued speaking.

“The one who ruined her cooking was Kaya and it was her lonely action. Why must we be affected because of her?”

“Do you think it’s unfair?”

The one who replied wasn’t Emily, but Alan. Anderson was elevating his tone while speaking, but forcefully repressed that and replied.

“Yes! I do. My mistake is wanting to take the main dish for me, and not knowing that she would act like a bitch like that. Is that reason to be disqualified?”

“It is.”

Alan replied shortly. He stared with his cold eyes. Alan went close to Anderson’s nose, and spoke with a scary voice that would anytime bite his face.

“Because you are a team. You talking like that right now means that you never considered yourselves to be a team.”

“.....But this is a competition! Even if we became teammates, we can’t act as real teams, can we?!”

“No! You can. If you weren’t thinking about competition but instead cooked, you would be considering each other as teammates. A chef isn’t a machine. It doesn’t end just by dividing

roles! Don't think that it ended just by presenting three dishes! The course is only one. It means that those three plates soon become one dish."

After saying all that, Alan caught his breath. It was as if Anderson was repressed by Alan's overwhelming momentum, that he couldn't speak anything in reply. Alan slowly opened his mouth. It was a voice that got smaller as if he was whispering.

"Of course, I admit that you weren't lucky. You and Kaya were both outstanding. And your prides were also strong. It was as if there were two protagonists in a movie. But it only means that. If you can't overcome a situation where you are unlucky means that your ability only extends to that much. After presenting that sucking three course, did you think that only you would be able to get out of it?"

Anderson couldn't reply. Even when he was first talking to Kaya and making the team, his confidence was overflowing. He did fight for the seat of the main dish, but he wondered if just because of that they would be in this kind of situation.

Was that his mistake? Anderson couldn't know the answer to that. His mind was yelling that it was not a mistake. He wanted to think that Alan's words were only that much. But the only thing Anderson could do was to keep his mouth shut. It wasn't because he was convinced. It was because even if he prolonged the talk, the judges wouldn't change their minds.

The judging continued. 9 teams. Of those, the teams that survived were only 6. That meant that of the 3 teams, 9 people

were going to be disqualified. Jo Minjoon just looked from the 2nd floor. From the disqualified people that were gathered, Joseph was opening his mouth.

“You are now in front of the door to disqualify. I don’t know how many of you would survive. But what I’m certain of, is that you are here because you presented a mess of a course. Lack of technique? Lack of teamworking skills? Either of which was it, the results would be the same.”

The disqualified people didn’t reply. Some seemed like they would cry any moment. And some were sniffing. However Joseph didn’t hesitate. A chef put a mess in a plate. That was something that was inconceivable to a chef.

“Before revealing the theme of the mission, you have something to do. You have to select a partner right now. Only then will I reveal the theme.”

At Joseph’s words, the participants moved from here to there and soon, started to partner up with the people next to them. Some teamed up with their original team, and those two had to awkwardly hold hands. But the disqualified people were 9 in total. So naturally, one had to be left out.

It was Kaya.

Nobody reached their hands to her. Because they had already seen her character in the course cooking. They wouldn’t want to team up with someone that might bring trouble. On top of that,

Kaya's skills weren't ordinary. If they were to team up with her, their dishes would rather lose light.

Kaya looked at her surroundings looking nervous. And forced herself to sound confident and looked at Joseph.

“I don't care if I'm alone.”

“.....I'm sorry but that's impossible. Kaya, you have to choose from one from the passing candidates. Of course, your partner won't be affected by the results of this mission.”

At those words, Kaya looked up to the 2nd floor. However, the passing candidates all evaded making eye contact. Even if they weren't going to get disqualified, they couldn't bear to be standing in that kind of place. Kaya, that was looking at the participants, stopped her sight at one place. Kaya, who was looking a long while at that face, said with her voice trembling.

“.....Help me.”

Jo Minjoon's face became rock hard.

# Chapter 26: Getting Help In The Face Of Getting Disqualified (1)

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The reason Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon and wanted him as a partner was simple. It couldn't be said that they were close, but it could be said that they had some sort of friendship. She didn't think about Jo Minjoon's skills or anything of the sort. She just needed someone she could be comfortable with.

However, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but hesitate looking at Kaya. Jo Minjoon remembered the theme of the next mission. [Foie gras](#). He did know how to make it, but it was something he had never made before. And it was also the same for Kaya. There was no way for someone from the ghetto to have cooked it.

The reason Kaya could survive in the past was because the partner she had chosen was Chloe. Chloe knew how to make it and even had experience doing so. She was different to Jo Minjoon.

Because of that, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but hesitate. Letting a hand in vain at that poor girl could rather get him results he hadn't expected. It meant that he didn't know if she would face disqualification that wasn't destined to happen. And that wasn't a simple disqualification. It was changing Kaya's life.

He needed to refuse. He had to. It was for the sake of Kaya. He thought so. But in the next moment, Jo Minjoon was already getting downstairs. With each step he took, his head got filled with more and more confusion. Just why? This decision wasn't for the sake of anyone. Just acting like a good person could play in stake Kaya's life and the money she had earned. But.

He couldn't stop his steps. Jo Minjoon walked towards Kaya with a rigid face. Even if it was now, he wouldn't be late. He had to tell her. That he wasn't confident.

But the moment he looked at Kaya, he couldn't open his mouth. Joseph's voice could be heard. He was asking him right now.

“Minjoon. Are you willing to be Kaya's partner?”

“.....First, let me ask her something.”

Jo Minjoon said that and looked at Kaya. Her sky blue eyes was darker than usual. Jo Minjoon talked with a voice a teacher had when he was teaching his student.

“It could be a mistake picking me. But are you sure you aren't going to regret it?”

“.....I don't know.”

Kaya replied in a low voice. It was similar to a patient who had caught a cold.

“Just..... I just thought of you. To help me.”

If the situation was different, it would sound pretty romantic. But right now, it was only heard as depressed and dejected. Jo Minjoon just looked at her. And opened as if he had decided something. The original future didn't matter. What was important



right now was that Kaya asked him for help. The idol who he had always admired was asking for his help right now.

Was it unavoidable to hold her hand?

“Okay. Let’s do it.”

“.....Thank you.”

Kaya replied without strength. Joseph, looking at them, clapped his hands. As everyone turned to look at him, he opened his mouth.

“As the team making is completed, now I’ll announce the mission. Everyone go to your respective countertops and check the box put on top.”

Jo Minjoon and Kaya went to the countertop that was farther away. An ice box the size of an apple box was in the place. Jo Minjoon already knew what would be inside of it. Foie gras. Kaya opened the lid hurriedly. It was as he remembered. A frozen foie gras that was vacuum sealed was inside of the ice box.

The disqualifying candidates all let out sighs. They could only do so. Because there wasn’t a more difficult dish to handle than foie gras. The price was as expensive as the best meat, and if you couldn’t cook it well it was comparable to just a meat chunk.

Foie gras. The name was okay but in the end, it was liver. And like every living being’s liver, it’s disgusting aroma was strong.

That aroma, perhaps even calling it aroma was excessive. But to remove that smell and make it better was the main point of foie gras.

“.....I don’t know how to do it.”

Next to him, Kaya mumbled anxiously. She was biting her lips to not express it, but it showed even more from her expression. Jo Minjoon talked with a low voice. It was a voice that could calm your heart just by hearing it.

“I have never cooked it. No, wait. Don’t make that face. We can do it. Kaya. You have cooked chicken liver or cow liver, right?”

Jo Minjoon consoled Kaya. Kaya nodded with a nervous face.

“I have. But foie gras is a bit different.”

“Even if it’s different, it’s still liver. Listen. This.....”

It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon wanted to continue speaking. Alan’s voice sounded in the room.

“What’s in front of you will be the theme for this mission. Foie gras. But you can’t prepare it at the same time. You will have to change who cooks in intervals of 5 minutes, and while you have shifted, you are not permitted to help if not by talking.”

Anxious voices could be heard from the place. Even while

excluding Jo Minjoon and Kaya, there were still many people not accustomed to making foie gras. For people that weren't even pros to make foie gras and have experience doing so was very hard. Because it was not an ingredient that was easily handled. Only Anderson could have handled it. But on top of that you had to tag between yourselves, the difficulty of this mission would have risen to the top.

“We'll give you 20 minutes to think of the recipe. Decide in that time. And the time given to cook will be 60 minutes.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. And opened his mouth.

“Let's roast it.”

It was brief, but Kaya understood. She had never cooked foie gras, but it wasn't that she had never heard of it. Because even she had studied the ingredients she had never handled before.

There were two main ways to cook foie gras. The first was roasting, and the second was grating it with spices and making it as a [pate mousse](#).

But realistically speaking, pate wasn't an option Jo Minjoon could choose right now. Because he, and also Kaya didn't completely understand about foie gras. For a flavor they couldn't understand to mix it with different spices and making a pate? It was obvious that a flavor worse than sausage that was sold in markets would come out instead.

Kaya frowned. She understood why Jo Minjoon chose that. But there was a mistake in that.

“It seems that you have forgotten, but this is frozen. I can’t say much because I don’t know about foie gras, but won’t the flavor be lacking a bit?”

“Nowadays freezing is done at high speed. It’s completely different than the freezers we have at our houses. If we handle it well, there won’t be a big difference with it being frozen.”

Of course, there would be some small differences compared to frozen ingredients. But it is enough to roast it. In the first place, if it was foie gras that couldn’t be roasted, the theme of the mission would be changed to making pate or cream.

And the main reason Jo Minjoon chose to roast it was because, in the original future, Kaya also chose to roast it. Jo Minjoon still remembered that scene. The scene where she cooked without having eaten nor seen with her own methods. He remembered that difficult challenge.

With that dish, Kaya was able to survive. She showed her worth. And he hoped that she would also do it this time. He didn’t want her to get disqualified because it was him and not Chloe that was besides her. He had to win. So because of that, Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but be more serious than Kaya.

“I promise you. I won’t get you disqualified.”

“.....Whatever you do. I’m not planning to do so.”

Kaya replied bluntly. Jo Minjoon just smiled without saying

anything. He got a feeling that he was looking at his little sister Jo Ara. He couldn't become a nuisance when he was asked for help. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes. The basic form of cooking it was putting puré on top of the roasted foie gras. He thought of tens of recipes for the puré kinds, and the estimated cooking score appeared as much as the recipes he had thought of. 5 points. 4 points. 5 points. 5 points. 6 points. 5 points.....

**7 points**

# Chapter 27: Getting Help In The Face Of Getting Disqualified (2)

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7 points. That was the best Jo Minjoon could get right now. He wouldn't know if he was cooking together with Kaya but first, he had to share what he had in mind. Jo Minjoon said while looking at her.

“Let's slice it roundly and thickly like a tenderloin and roast it. The method is using arroser while pouring cooking oil. There's no need to put in olive oil. Because there's abundant oil in the foie gras.”

Jo Minjoon quickly said all of that. Kaya nodded with her mind going blank and nodded. And then she asked.

“What about the sauce?”

Jo Minjoon slowly ordered things in his mind. The most basic virtue foie gras sauce needed to have was complementing its flavor full of fat. And to complement that, it was necessary to be both sweet and sour at the same time.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I'm going to make white grape sauce. I'm going to boil down the grape in vermouth, and I'm also going to put a bit of demi-glace sauce.... And from this point there are two choices. Is it going to be better to make the demi-glace ourselves?”

It was a sensitive part. The demi-glace sauce was a sauce to be boiled down when put brown sauce and meat gravy. It could take 30 minutes to make it, but like all dishes that contained gravy, the more you boiled it, the deeper became the flavor. Basically, good quality demi-glace sauces in top restaurants took up to 2 hours, so it was unquestionable that time was essential and important.

Were you going to make a handmade demi-glace sauce in 1 hour, no, 50 minutes, or use a commercial sauce? That was the problem that presented in front of them. Because they couldn't know if the handmade sauce was going to be better than the commercial one.

Kaya bit her lips as if she was submerged in her thoughts. However, Jo Minjoon could vaguely know what she was going to reply.

“Let's make it.”

A smile could be seen in Jo Minjoon's face. Right. This is what it means to be a chef. To make every little thing they could with their own hands. To want their hands to be a condiment of the food was what meant to be a chef.

“You can slowly handle the foie gras. I just saw that it had melted quite a bit. First, let's melt it in the fridge. Because we won't have to even touch it until we have made the sauce and about to do the plating.”

“Okay. I understand. What about the garnish? What about slicing the remaining white grapes and putting it on top?”

“Good for me.”

As he held a conversation with her, Jo Minjoon felt that it was rather miraculous that he was talking with her. Meeting someone famous from the TV would be like that, but they were similar at the time to cook. Even if it was a famous chef with reputation, while their skills and understanding towards cooking improved, there would be more differences than things in common with other chefs.

However Jo Minjoon and Kaya weren't like that. Of course, they had just started the path to being a chef, but their styles were similar. Suddenly, Jo Minjoon thought of a thing. What if I start to work in the same kitchen as her....?

‘Now’s not the time to be thinking these things.’

Sloppy delusions were sufficient even after the mission ended. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“If they say that tagging is difficult, then it should. Who will start? The second person is going to be in charge to make the foie gras. Not even making it, but also the plating. The changes are in intervals of 5 minutes, and there are only 60 minutes.”

To roast the foie gras and put it in a plate was better if it was done the latest they could. Because there was a need to squash the white grape that was going to be put in the demi-glace sauce the longest time possible. Kaya opened her mouth. She seemed like she wanted to take responsibility.



“I will do it. Wrapping up. Because in the end, it’s my problem.”

“.....Foie gras, you said you have never made it. Are you going to be okay?”

“You are the same. So I have to challenge myself. And this is something I have to do. As I said before, it’s my problem. It’s my mistake and my mission.”

“No. It’s a team mission.”

Jo Minjoon replied with a determined voice. Kaya looked at him a little surprised. He seemed like a teacher that was scolding his student, and actually, Jo Minjoon was thinking just like that. He wished that Kaya could understand the reason she entered the disqualifying candidates. He wanted to show her what was the meaning of team missions, and how to work in such circumstances.

Actually, Chloe should have been in his place. She could calm Kaya’s heart with just her soft and gentle smile. And she could even tell her the meaning of what a team was without even telling her directly. However, Jo Minjoon knew well that he couldn’t be like her.

What he could do instead of Chloe’s warmth was waking her up with words. And fortunately, it seemed like Kaya had understood what he had wanted to tell her. Kaya hesitated a little and in the end, nodded.

“Okay. I will remember.”

“Good.”

Jo Minjoon smiled and looked at the clock. Because he was thinking of the concept of the menu, 13 minutes have already passed from the 20 given minutes. 7 minutes. It was too short of a time for them to do something. Awkwardness flowed from both of them. The one who opened her mouth first was Kaya. She questioned him with things she had wanted to ask for some time.

“Why are you treating me well?”

“I don’t think I am, though.”

“No, why. You do. That time with the catfish mission, when you asked me to trade our dishes, and also that time when you said that I was going to win in the interview. Right. It couldn’t be said that you did treat me well. But I’m sure that you are favorable towards me. Why? Maybe....”

Kaya glanced slightly at the camera. She held the mic that was attached to her clothes with her left hand, and with her right hand, grabbed Jo Minjoon’s mic. Jo Minjoon was perplexed, so he couldn’t say anything in that instant. Kaya opened her mouth. It was a rather serious voice.

“Do you like me?”

The reason he couldn’t reply instantly wasn’t because she had hit the bullseye. It was because he had never thought that he would get that question from Kaya herself. He had also denied it like that in the interview. Jo Minjoon replied with a frozen face.

“Not at all.”

“Hmm.....Really?”

Kaya's eyes became sharper. She looked at him for a while and then, talked while smiling.

"Then keep not liking me."

"I know you are going to look at me funny when I ask this question. But why can't I?"

"Because I'm like a shit girl. You don't understand the meaning for a white person to grow in a poor house. And there's nothing you would gain if you did know the meaning."

".....I'm sorry, but I already like you."

At his words, Kaya frowned. Jo Minjoon felt like he had landed a blow, so he continued speaking while smiling.

"Not as a girl, but as a chef."

"But why? Was there something special that I have showed you?"

"You showed me your potential. And also your talent. I was envious. And I also wanted to catch up to you as much as I was envious. It's like that. When you are watching TV and start to cheer for a participant. It could be that I'm cheering for you as a viewer of Grand Chef."

".....But you are not part of the audience, but a participant."

At Kaya's words, Jo Minjoo shrugged his shoulders.

"Won't Messi cheer for Ronaldo at times?"

Kaya didn't reply. She was looking at Jo Minjoon while shaking. She could really not understand this man called Jo Minjoon. Why could that be? Why was this man more confident and believed in her more than she did in herself?

She couldn't know. It was only because Jo Minjoon already knew the future where Kaya became the winner. And Kaya's imagination wasn't as big as to imagine something that was improbable. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Why don't you let go of your hand? The camera is still recording. Do you want to be edited again?”

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and pointed towards the cameraman. The cameraman was all smiles for a while as if he had captured a good scene. Kaya opened the hand that was holding Jo Minjoon's mic. Then she held up her arms as if she was doing a surrendering gesture.

“I'm sorry, but I thought that it shouldn't have been recorded.”

“That's right.....”

Jo Minjoon looked at the cameraman. And then frowned. There was a microphone clearly attached in the camera. Jo Minjoon asked him.

“Can this thing record?”

The cameraman, instead of replying, put a smile. Jo Minjoon

mumbled as if it was a pain in the ass. “We are ruined.” Kaya was looking at the cameraman rigidly. It seemed that she thought that if she blocked the participants mic, they would be able to be free from being broadcasted. Kaya asked Jo Minjoon.

“.....It is going to be broadcasted, right?”

“If it doesn’t, then the PD would be an incapable person.”

And Martin wasn’t an incapable man however you looked at him. Kaya said with an annoyed face.

“I’m already telling you, but this.....”

“The time has ended for you to think of your menus! Now, the participants should bring the ingredients.”

“They say so. I’ll be going.”

Jo Minjoon left Kaya back and moved his feet. She seemed like she was about to say something, but he didn’t mind. Whatever it was, only he was going to get more complicated. It was good to not be thinking about anything while cooking. Jo Minjoon mumbled by himself.

‘It seems like she still hasn’t understood what being a team means.’

## Chapter 28: Getting Help In The Face Of Getting Disqualified (3)

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Jo Minjoon grumbled and picked the ingredients. White grape, garlic, brown sauce and bill stock made from calf bones. The condiments were tomatoes, tomato paste, red wine, vermouth, salt, etc.

When he was bringing the ingredients, almost 2 minutes had passed. Jo Minjoon grated the grapes and poured the vermouth in a bowl. The wine was a liquor made by mixing brandy, medicinal herbs, spices and etc.

Vermouth was divided into two types. A sweet one just like it's name, sweet vermouth and a sour one called dry vermouth.

And there were also another two types with other standards. White vermouth and red vermouth. As you could see from the names, it varied depending if it was made with red wine or white wine. What Jo Minjoon was using right now was a sweet vermouth made with white wine. It was to save the color of the white grapes, and at the same time, to save the sweet flavor.

There was no need to boil it now. Precisely speaking, he didn't have to. If he had used commercial demiglace sauce then he wouldn't have to do all these things. Because he would be done after putting the sauce in the boiling puré.

But they were planning to make the demiglace sauce themselves. When the demiglace sauce was about to be finished, then you had

to start boiling the puré. Of course, they had to finish it before roasting the foie gras. Probably, the one to finish the sauce was going to be Jo Minjoon.

It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was going to handle the garlic. The buzzer rang and Alan's voice resounded.

“Change!”

Uncertain actions started to happen at all the countertops. Jo Minjoon put down the knife and moved back. Kaya grabbed the knife and started to handle the garlic very quickly. And after she fried the garlic in the pan, when it was turning brown, she poured the red wine. At that moment, a flame surged up through the pan.

[Flambé](#). It was a technique used to send away all of the bad aroma through igniting alcohol in the food. And then, Kaya's hands stopped. It wasn't that she had forgotten what to do next. She had nothing else to do but wait until the sauce boiled down and stir at times.

It was when she thought that it was going to be boring. Alan approached her and opened his mouth.

“What kind of dish are you thinking of making?”

“I'm going to slice the foie gras and roast it and on top of that I'm going to put white grape puré.”

“It seems like you are going to make the demiglace sauce that is used in the puré by yourself....Will you be able to finish in time?”

“I'll accomplish it.”

Kaya replied cheekily. Alan stopped for a moment and looked at her. He couldn't make out if it was because he hadn't tried her dish earlier, or if she was just replying with her original attitude.

Because of that, it felt funny for Alan to bring out that incident first. Alan coughed and looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Thinking about the turn of your tagging then making the foie gras would be done by Kaya and completing the sauce would be done by you.”

“Yes.”

“Kaya, have you ever made foie gras?”

“No. I haven't even eaten it.”

“Minjon, what about you?”

“Me neither.”

Precisely speaking, he did eat it. But that was a canned food eaten by French residents. To say that he had eaten it was impudent.

Alan said lowly.

“Don't think of foie gras as normal liver. A swan's liver has more oil and has a deeper flavor than any animal's. And you don't have to take off it's aroma, but rather, save it. Please remind this.”

“Yes, I understand.”

Alan moved away with Jo Minjoon's reply. Kaya glanced at Alan



and concentrated again on her dish. He wanted to tell something to that Kaya, but now was the time to be concentrating. Of course, she was only waiting for the sauce to boil down to say that she was concentrating.

“Kaya....”

The moment Jo Minjoon opened his mouth, the buzzer rang. Jo Minjoon and Kaya quickly shifted places. Jo Minjoon looked at the pan. The soup had boiled down quite a bit and bubbles were rising. Jo Minjoon asked.

“Kaya, this is half boiled down right?”

“Probably.”

“Okay.”

Jo Minjoon poured the bill stock, calf gravy in the pan. Then, he lowered the fire to the minimum and started to boil it. After that, he took out a new pan and fried the tomato paste. At that time, the buzzer rang again. While Jo Minjoon was backing he told her.

“When the tomato paste turns brown put it immediately in the sauce. Also do it for the spices and the tomatoes.”

“I already know.”

15 minutes had already passed. The given time was 60 minutes. They had to use the last 5 minutes to cook the foie gras. So they only had 40 minutes left to finish the sauce.

‘.....Will it be enough?’

He wasn't confident. Foods that used the gravy like demiglace sauce as a base, were all not so delicious. Even masters that had been working for tens of years had to use their own methods to produce their wanted flavor. It was difficult to boast about the quality of a recipe made in the moment at this place.

Of course, he did have the help of the system. And the recipe's score was good. 7 points. It was quite an excellent score for a sauce that had to be made in 55 minutes. But if there was even a little bit of a mistake, then a completely different result would come out. He wasn't in a situation where he could relax.

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. She was putting the tomato paste in the sauce and, putting pepper, thyme, and half sliced tomatoes in the gravy. This was to catch the displeasing smell of the gravy and at the same time save the aroma.

Now was really a fight with time. Kaya kept removing the foam that surged from the demiglace sauce in the remaining time. And then, the buzzer rang. Only 40 minutes were left.

Jo Minjoon immediately turned on the fire for the pot that contained the white grapes and the vermouth. The time to complete the puré was around 30 minutes. He had to start right now so he could finish it in time.

‘Can't they make us do a normal team mission?’

He kept having those thoughts but honestly, he understood the reason. There were many tables where the participants movements were not synchronised. It wasn't that they didn't share their cooking method. But as they shared their recipes, there were parts that they would omit as if it was obvious. And in the place of those omitted parts, they would put in their own cooking methods. Of course, those were methods that their partner didn't even think about.

In that situation, depending if they respected each other's methods or not, the result would vary greatly. And most of them couldn't help but be persistent with their own methods. Because it was easier to believe in yourself than in another person.

However, Kaya and Jo Minjoon were different. But of course, it didn't mean that they threw away their stubbornness and respected the others method. Their attitude towards cooking were basically similar. From how they handled fire, to how they handled the knife. And Jo Minjoon knew very well the reason for that.

Kaya Lotus. It was because of that name. The name Jo Minjoon was most envious of, and wanted to imitate. He saw almost hundreds of videos that showed Kaya cooking. He studied how she approached cooking, and how she cooked.

Saying the truth, Kaya was Jo Minjoon's teacher. And at the same time, his mentor. The one who gave him a dream, who was looking at the harsh sides and almost wanted to give up, was her.

That's why their cooking couldn't help but be similar. Precisely

speaking, it couldn't be helped that Jo Minjoon's cooking resembled Kaya's. Because the one who influenced him on cooking the most was Kaya. All of the favoritism directed at her were because of that reason. And because of that, it was even more so.

‘I can't make her disqualify.’

She was Jo Minjoon's benefactor. Although it wasn't her intention, the one who introduced Jo Minjoon the world of cooking and made him greedy to walk on that path was her. She was someone who taught him that something like cooking could be splendid, and at times it could be beautiful. It could be said that it was one sided that he was treating her as his teacher.

Jo Minjoon knew really well how she was going to grow as a chef. He knew how valuable of a chef she was. And the proof of that worth was through this program.

Kaya gave him a yearning for cooking. Because of an unexpected variable like him, he couldn't make her disqualified that didn't even exist in the first place. Jo Minjoon stirred attentively the two pots with his hands. If it stuck even a little, then the burning scent would fill the sauce. So he could only be attentive.

The buzzer rang. Kaya and Jo Minjoon changed places. She was doing the same thing. Removing the foam. Kaya let out a sigh while taking out the foam.

“I expected this, but it's really a pain.”

“It's a battle against yourself.

Jo Minjoon laughed while saying that. She wiped the sweat that was gathered on her forehead and asked.

“What do you think about the other teams? Are they doing well?”

“I think we are the best in teamwork.”

“.....Is there something like teamwork?”

“At least we know what we are going to be doing next.”

Kaya didn't reply. And then, the buzzer rang. 30 minutes passed and 30 minutes were left. Kaya let out a sigh while looking at Jo Minjoon that was stirring with the ladle.

“I get this feeling that I'm able to take it easy. Anyways, this tagging system is rather good. Because you can rest for 5 minutes.”

“What a surprise. You being optimistic.”

“Did you see me as a pessimistic person?”

Jo Minjoon started to think at that question. What kind of person was Kaya? The Kaya he looked at the videos was a confident person and full of energy. At least, she was like that after Grand Chef. However, before that, Kaya was really different. She was confident, but that confidence was made up, and there was anxiety hidden somewhere in her heart. Thinking about that, he came up with a response naturally.

“But you aren't an optimist.”

“How many people in the world are optimistic? If you are not a fool, then it's hard to be it.”

Kaya said bitterly. That voice made Jo Minjoon curious about Kaya's life. Because even in the broadcast, she just said that her past was rather difficult. So because of that, even Jo Minjoon couldn't know about her in detail. He even remembered what she had told him.

'You don't know what it means to grow as a white person in a poor house.'

What could those words mean? He didn't know. He didn't grow up in the US and only saw the bright side of Kaya in the videos. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. He wanted to be a help to her as much as he got hope from her.

"There's no need to be optimistic. Just believe in yourself. What I said in the interview wasn't bullshit. You are a skilled chef and have talent. So there's no need to be nervous like a newcomer that came for an interview."

Honestly, he didn't want to see Kaya being nervous. Competitor. Even if he tried to engrave that word in his head, in the end, she was still his idol and teacher. He wouldn't like to see the dejected shape of that kind of person.

Kaya didn't reply. Jo Minjoon couldn't know what she would be thinking by herself.

And the buzzer rang four more times like that. 50 minutes. The remaining time was 10 minutes. It also meant that he had to finish the sauce soon.

Jo Minjoon used the sieve to separate the white grape pur  . The thick pulp was left in the sieve, and the pure sat on top of the white demiglace like white cream. And the next step was simple. He had to mix a spoonful of the demiglace sauce with pure.

That work was seen foolishly and funnily. He had to arduously make the demiglace sauce and in the end the amount to be mixed was just two spoons. However, he believed that those two spoons would become the key to victory.

And then, the results he believed in appeared.

# Chapter 29: Getting Help In The Face Of Getting Disqualified (4)

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[White grape puré]

Freshness: 84%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: Medium (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 7/10

It wasn't bad. Taking into account that it was made by Jo Minjoon, it was a really good score. But for Kaya to have helped him on this dish, it was an ordinary score. But the dish wasn't completed yet. Because the foie gras wasn't cooked.

Jo Minjoon tasted the puré. The sweet and sour flavors unique of the white grape stimulated his tongue. And what was felt at the end was the flavor of the demi-glace sauce. It wasn't too excessive and you didn't get sick of it.

Jo Minjoon turned to look at Kaya.

“Shall we place the puré in the plate first?”

“Yes. That would be good.”

Jo Minjoon picked a rectangular plate. Then he poured the puré in a round shape. He didn't forget what Alan had told him. That he was neglecting plating. So he wanted to show that.



Jo Minjoon dropped three drops of puré in a zigzag shape. Then he pushed the puré to the empty spaces of the dish with the bottom part of the spoon. At first glance, it looked like three lines were drawn. The top and bottom lines drawn to the right, and the middle line drawn to the left.

He thought that it would be quite good if he placed the three pieces of foie gras for the judges. Jo Minjoon looked back again at Kaya. Kaya's eyes were more serious than ever. It was at that time when Jo Minjoon was opening his mouth.

“Kaya.....”

“Time is over! This is the last shift! Quickly finish your dishes!”

Even before Jo Minjoon could say something, the buzzer, together with Alan's voice sounded. Kaya stood in front of the countertop with a frozen expression. And then, took the foie gras.

Foie gras, at first glance, looked like chicken breast that was boiled down in beer. The yellowy brown exterior wasn't as smooth as she had thought.

Kaya touched the exterior of the foie gras slightly. It was soft. And when she sliced it, that sensation didn't change. The foie gras, which interior was well thawed, sliced as well as pudding.

Kaya started to slice the foie gras. It had the shape of a narrow and thick columns. She placed it in the hot pan.

Foie gras was a dish which you had to accumulate fat in the goose's liver. Also it released abundant oil and the amount it released was enough to fill the pan.

When one side of it got seared enough, Kaya flipped the foie gras. Then tilted the pan. The foie gras started to tilt to one side, and the oil started to gather in one place. Then, Kaya used that oil to pour it on the foie gras. It was the arroser method Jo Minjoon had used previously.

The sight of the oil sizzling and boiling was really pleasing to see. The thick aroma that could be felt wasn't nowhere near what they remembered. The aroma was so strong that you could mistake the meat for spices. Jo Minjoon tried to connect the aroma he had never experienced before with something in his mind. But he couldn't do so. It was at the point that there was almost nothing that could be compared to.

She placed the seared foie gras on top of the white grape puré. And on top of that was placed the thinly sliced white grapes as decoration. And at that moment, an uncontainable smile could be seen from Jo Minjoon's mouth.

[Foie gras steak with white grape puré]

Freshness: 82%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: Middle (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 8/10

8 points. The dish that was half made by him got an 8. It meant that it could be presented in a Michelin restaurant immediately. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. Looking at that joyful expression, Kaya couldn't help but frown.

“What? Why that expression?”

“The food, I think it's made well.”

“What are you? A food beethoven? To know without eating it?”

Kaya grumbled like that, but her expression wasn't bad. She too probably knew. That the dish was a success. How would she be called a chef if she didn't know how well her dish was cooked?

The last buzzer rang. And Joseph opened his mouth.

“Time is over. Everybody, put your hands off the countertop.”

It was a quiet voice, but that weight was heavy. Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at his surroundings. They had mostly finished their dishes. Except for one team. That team's foie gras was fried, but the problem wasn't that it was seared, it was burnt. It was as if they didn't have hope in their dishes, but their expressions were dark. What were they going to do about it? If they made a 3 points dish. Even if it was an amateur competition, it was something that shouldn't even be presented in a dish.

The rest were all 5 points, excluding Anderson's. Jo Minjoon thought that Anderson's team's dish was going to be an 8, but unexpectedly it was only 7 points.

‘They also made foie gras steak.’

But thinking about it strategically, you could only cook it as steak. Because pat   or mousse couldn’t bring the true flavor of foie gras. You wouldn’t know if it was a mission where you only had to give it flavor, but it wasn’t good to do so in a foie gras themed mission.

Actually, there were 3 teams out of 5 that had chosen to make it like steak. Of course, excluding Anderson’s and Kaya’s team, the other one ended up burning the steak.

The judges walked towards the team that burnt the foie gras. They were just looking at the dish, and left the countertop without any word. At that cold sight, Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but get chills down his spine.

The next table the judges went to was Anderson’s. It was foie gras steak accompanied with balsamic reduction that was sweet and sour at the same time. The expressions of the judges were quite good. Alan opened his mouth first.

“It’s fine.”

“It’s qualitative and clean.”

“Anderson. With this dish we could confirm that you are a person who has been taught properly how to cook.”

“Carlos, it’s good that you adjusted yourself with Anderson’s recipe and cooking methods. But I wonder if your individual work

wasn't shown properly. Even so, this dish was delicious. I'll believe in your consideration. Go to the 2nd floor!"

Going to the 2nd floor meant that you have passed. The evaluation ended like that with Carlos's cheer and Anderson's smile.

However, the only time the judges expressions was bright was only in front of Anderson's dish. For the next two tables, the judges only spat malicious words at them.

"What did you cook?"

"I tried to make foie gras paté accompanied with a baguette."

"Paté? This is paté? Damn, Louis. Just say that this is mousse. Then I would be less angry. Look at this texture. The feeling the paté gives must be thicker than a creamy feeling and at the same time, feeling of a sausage. But what is this? It's a flavor which I would rather like to eat mustard."

".....I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Don't be sorry to me. Be sorry for the dish. Oh god. This goose would have never imagined that the purpose it has lived for was to become this poor soil cream."

At Alan's words, the participants couldn't say a word. The same was the same for the next table. Emily who tried a bite of the foie gras with canape, just sighed. Then asked.

"This, did you make paté?"

At that moment, the participants couldn't reply and hesitated. It seemed that they had remembered the earlier words of Alan. That they had rather replied that it was mousse. Even for them, it looked really greasy and oily. Emily looked at them sharply and said.

“It seems that you can't even say the name of your dish. It looks like you aren't even worthy to be evaluated. Do you agree?”

The participants still didn't reply. Leaving behind those participants, the judges approached Kaya and Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon gulped. He already knew that it was well made, but looking at the words thrown at the other participants, he couldn't help but get nervous. And it was the same for Kaya. Her hands were slightly shaking. Joseph opened his mouth.

“What did you make?”

“It's foie gras steak. We accompanied it with white grape puré, as for the garnish, we placed white grape slices.”

At Jo Minjoon's reply, the judges slowly sliced the foie gras. When they ate a bite, they couldn't think about hiding their amazements and let out admiration sounds.

It was really professional and harmonious flavor. It was so well roasted that you wouldn't believe that it was frozen foie gras. It's insides and the outside was filled with a soft fat flavor. But the white grape puré was catching that flavor.

If you said that it was white grape puré, then it was basically a

sweet and neat flavor. It was easy to think that it wouldn't suit a heavy steak like foie gras, but the demi-glace sauce prevented that. The role of the demi-glace sauce was to be a bridge. A bridge located between the puré and the foie gras. The aroma of the puré was preventing the foie gras aroma and the flavor of the puré to play separately.

It was a rather calculated flavor. It was almost unbelievable that it was the first time for Jo Minjoon and Kaya to cook foie gras. Alan opened his mouth unconsciously.

“This.....Incredible.”

“It's really delicious. Personally, I think that this is the best dish I have eaten in this program. The flavor of the puré, and the flavor of the foie gras are all perfect. And they don't even play separately. You have shown a dish that can't get better than this. Thank you.”

Following Alan, Emily said while laughing. Even if she was containing it, it was a smile that couldn't help but show. The cameraman recorded while smiling, looking at Kaya and Jo Minjoon forcing themselves to be calm. They were a pair that were good to see.

Joseph said with a soft smile.

“Kaya, we didn't eat your dish in the previous mission. It was even a good dish, if you didn't take into account that it was a course cooking. Now do you know that reason?”

“.....Will there be anyone who says that they don't in this kind of situation?”

Kaya replied sharply. That she knew the reason. She couldn't say that she was reflecting on it. But that attitude wasn't any different than saying that she knew the reason. Joseph smiled brightly and said.

“Kaya. You are a really talented chef. But no chef can cook alone. Trust in your teammate like now, and have a supporting heart. Then, your cooking will shine even more brightly.”

Kaya seemed ashamed as to reply something, so she only hit the floor with her heel. Joseph said while looking at Jo Minjoon.

“I heard that you, Minjoon, were the one to think of the sauce, am I right?”

“Yes, you are.”

“You said that you have never eaten foie gras, so how could you think of a recipe that suited foie gras?”

It was a really sharp question. But it seemed that Jo Minjoon had already prepared to get out of that hole.

“I have seen it in an image. Foie gras with white grape puré.”

“So are you saying that you depended on that image alone to replicate the flavor?”

“Yes.”

Jo Minjoon replied shortly. Joseph looked frustrated at Jo



Minjoon. What was this youth? To follow the flavor inside of an image? Of course, you could get inspired by the image in the image. However it was a really picky combination. Be it the demi-glace sauce that connected the foie gras with puré, or thinking about cooking foie gras with the arroser method.

But that Jo Minjoon made the recipe. Was it coincidence? Or talent? Saying the truth, he wasn't confident in judging this participant. He was a really peculiar participant. He was a peculiar chef.

“.....Excellent. You have good talent. Minjoon.”

In the end, the only thing Joseph could tell him, was only that. Jo Minjoon replied while smiling.

“Thank you.”

After they finished evaluating Jo Minjoon, the judges shared their opinions. The debate didn't last long. Even after they sensed it to be a drag, Alan glanced at Kaya and Jo Minjoon and asked.

“What are you doing here?”

“.....Yes?”

Alan laughed.

“Go to the 2nd floor!”

# Chapter 30: A Well Made Dish And Good Food (1)

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It would be cruelty for the losers, but at least, Grand Chef treated it's winners really well. Right now, it was the same on using fresh ingredients. All the participants, excluding the disqualified ones, could use fresh ingredients without restrictions.

A pantry that had almost all of the ingredients excluding foie gras and shark fin. The ingredients warehouse was no different to heaven for those who liked to cook.

It was an obvious thing for the participants to grab the knife a couple of times in a day. They made experiments without holding back, and those experiments were eaten by the broadcasting crew, but were mostly eaten by themselves.

And that was the reason Chloe wanted to cry.

“What can I do. I think I got fatter.”

Chloe said that while grabbing her belly fat. Jo Minjoon looked at her as if he couldn't understand her. Because in his eyes, she just looked slim. Because of her lightly tanned skin, her body seemed as resilient as a black person.

However, Jo Minjoon didn't particularly point that out. Because he knew well that whenever you talked about weight with a girl, there would be nothing to gain with that. But Marco didn't seem to

be like him. He looked at Chloe with a dumbfounded expression.

“You..... got fatter?”

Chloe looked back at Marco and put an awkward face. Marco’s barrel like body that was seated on a sofa, made it look like it was a bath chair. To complain about her weight next to him. It was at that moment. Next to them a grumbling voice could be heard.

“If she says that she got fatter, then she did. Does she have to get as fat as you to say that she gained weight?”

It was Kaya. She opened her mouth with her usual cold expression. Only, she wasn’t looking at Marco but was looking at her handphone screen. Seeing that her eyes twitched at times, she was probably reading comments about her. Chloe sat in the sofa’s arm and started to massage Kaya.

“Why don’t you stop reading the comments? That’s not good for your mental health.”

“It’s okay. This much bad mouthing is something I use to hear all the time.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya and let out a sigh. Even after the first episode ended, she didn’t check the comments about her like that. No, even if she did check, she did it with a lighter expression. However, she wasn’t like that right now. To be precise, it was after yesterday’s second episode got broadcasted.

Grand Chef episode 2 was about the qualifying processes in other regions. Probably, it was going to be like that until episode 3. The important thing was the protagonist of episode 2. Just like Kaya became the main character in episode 1, episode 2 protagonist was Anderson.

And that was a method to originate fervor between the viewers. Kaya Lotus, who comes from the ghetto, and Anderson Rousseau, who grew from an elite chefs house. The colour of the two participants were clearly different.

It was the start of war. Kaya's fans bad mouthed Anderson, and it was the same otherwise. In the end, both of the participants ended up getting hurt, but fandom tended to flow to the extreme.

Jo Minjoon just looked at Kaya. She was still young, but she was already grown up. They say that you won't get any business in front of ill natured comments, but Jo Minjoon believed that Kaya would accept that naturally. However he didn't like that she kept on looking at the comments. Jo Minjoon said. It was a magic word that could make every one to get up.

“Let's eat lunch.”

“.....lunch? It isn't even 11:30? It hasn't even been 3 hours since I had breakfast.”

“If you keep cooking then you will get hungry. And Chloe, you are still slim. So there's no need to be like that. Let's go.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and slightly glanced at Kaya. Kaya didn't seem to catch because she was busy looking at the smart

phone, but Marco and Chloe understood Jo Minjoon's gaze. In the end, Marco let out a sigh and got that heavy body up from the sofa.

“What are we going to eat?”

—

The reason Marco, Chloe and Jo Minjoon got close was simple. Team mission. After that day, those three were always together. And it wasn't like that just for their team. Most of the participants tended to get along with the others they were together with on that day.

However, Kaya was an exception among those. She couldn't help but be it. Because she ended up cooking a dish that wasn't favorable for the team on a team mission. And even people that weren't with her on the same team couldn't help but find it burdensome. In the end, Kaya became no different than a loner.

The reason Kaya grouped with Jo Minjoon's team was unexpectedly not because of Jo Minjoon, but because of Chloe. Jo Minjoon was worried about Kaya's pride and couldn't even get near her, but Chloe approached her with her unique bright attitude. She got rejected and approached her. Got rejected once more and approached her once again.

‘Chloe's personality is really good.’

It was to the point that she made you think that. Chloe was

steady. She seemed like someone who couldn't just leave alone someone who had just gotten hurt. Perhaps, it could be consideration because she teamed up with Jo Minjoon.

The result of that repeating many times is what you see right now. A lunch that was being cooked by people holding a pan like a family. Jo Minjoon rather enjoyed this situation.

Those four were standing in the kitchen and each making a dish. It was a method that was copied from the course cooking sloppily. Jo Minjoon made [aglio e olio](#), Chloe made potato soup, Kaya was in charge of grilled scallops. And it was souffle for Marco.

Aglio e olio was a simple dish and varied depending on the chef. Olive oil acted instead of the sauce, so the noodles texture, salt seasoning and the strength of the aroma was clearly differentiated. It was a dish that wasn't roughly made unlike with tomato sauce.

Of course, it was a really comfortable dish to challenge in making because the ingredients used were only olive oil, garlic, cayenne pepper and spaghetti noodles. The reason koreans made aglio e olio first and the most was because of that reason. While making a dish you weren't accustomed to, it was natural to think about using cheaper ingredients thinking that you could fail the dish.

It was also through cooking pasta that Jo Minjoon earnestly got the hang of cooking. Precisely speaking, it was through aglio e olio. And that was quite a good lesson. Because you could approach more analytically about the inherent flavor of the oil, and the aroma of the garlic, cayenne pepper and etc.

Jo Minjoon poured oil and salt in the boiling water. The salt was to season the noodles, and the olive oil was for the noodles to not get sticky. And then, took out the spaghetti noodles. Normally for koreans, when they thought about pasta, they would think about spaghetti.

And it was also the most suitable noodle to make aglio e olio. If you used a flat and long noodle like fettuccine, then the greasy flavor of the oil was felt strongly. There weren't different kind of pastas for no reason.

Jo Minjoon put in the spaghetti in the boiling water. His mood got better while looking at the noodles spread like a petal. He put aside the boiling pot and took out some garlic.

When koreans made aglio e olio, the biggest difference was the amount of garlic used. If you took into account the love for garlic, then Korea was a country that didn't get pushed back by any other country. However, it wasn't the traditional way to cook aglio e olio. For aglio e olio, it was 1 clove of garlic per person. But there were many cases where koreans used not one clove, but the whole garlic.

It was because they couldn't enjoy boring flavors. Because korean cuisine was characterized for its strong flavor. And fortunately, Jo Minjoon considered that he was overseas. The garlic cloves he sliced were exactly three.

Even before the spaghetti got properly cooked, Jo Minjoon

heated the pan and poured a good amount of olive oil. And then, put the garlic and pepper and started to cook it. And at that moment, the noodles were cooked perfectly to the al dente state. If it was compared to meat, then it would be medium rare.

Jo Minjoon used a sieve to throw the water and separate the noodle. Then took a spoonful of the used water and mixed it. If you poured the used water like this, it seasoned it a bit, but it also enabled the oil to mix well with the noodles. There were times that you didn't put in water, but that was because the noodles were watery enough.

When the water boiled down a bit, he put in a bright red peperoncino pepper. Based on the person they would fry garlic together with pepper, but Jo Minjoon didn't like that flavor. It was a good method to save the flavor if you fried the noodles at the same time.

At this point it was almost completed. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I'm almost done, what about you?”

“The scallops are also almost done. But i'm going to finish cooking it with a torch so it doesn't matter.”

Kaya's voice could be heard. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth once again.

“Chloe, and you?”



“I’m going to finish at the same time you complete your dish. Even so, you need to cool down aglio e olio. I think that it would be fine to eat it at that time.”

He didn’t particularly ask Marco. The meringue dough that was going to be used for the soufflé was already made beforehand, so if you put it in the oven at the right time, then it was over. However, Marco was preparing in case he also got a question, but seeing that nothing was heard, he put a long face and hanged his head down.

Of course, it was a situation Jo Minjoon couldn’t see. He turned off the burner’s fire that was burning weakly, and shook the pan once. The slippery noodles seemed quite delicious.

He started serving the noodles in four dishes, and sprinkled parsley powder. People used to simply think that parsley powder was used for decoration, but unexpectedly, parsley powder was an herb that had a thick aroma. It was also a herb that couldn’t be out of aglio e olio.

He didn’t put parmesan cheese. Putting cheese in aglio e olio was a debatable problem even overseas. Compared to Korea, it was similar to putting egg in ramen or not. That’s why he put the parmesan cheese in a separate bowl.

Jo Minjoon looked at the aglio e olio. Unfortunately, the cooking score was 6. He let out a sigh. It was difficult to get 7 points without using a special recipe. Nowadays, he started to get more thoughts about cooking skills. It was because the 7 points recipe, when cooked by Kaya, became an 8 points dish.

Of course, it was meaningless to envy a skill he didn't have yet. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I'm done.”

“Me too.”

Chloe laughed and brought the whole pot. It would be quite a weird sight for those who didn't know much about western culture. Because they don't allow many hands going for one dish because it's unhygienic.

But putting the pot in the middle and serving themselves was quite common for westerners. At least, the United States was like that. There were many cases where they served the spaghetti with tongs.

Jo Minjoon looked at the soup. And at that moment, he couldn't help but get perplexed. The cooking score was being shown. But the score was weird. Maybe there was a mistake with the system, or even if there wasn't a problem, it was a score that didn't convince him. Chloe tilted her head and asked puzzled.

“What, why are you looking like that?”

“No....It's nothing much.”

Jo Minjoon smiled awkwardly and replied. However, there were still many doubts left in front of his eyes.

Chloe's potato soup was 6 points.

## Chapter 31: A Well Made Dish And Good Food (2)

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Of course, considering that Chloe's cooking level was 7, it wasn't weird for a 6 points dish to appear. Because if her condition was bad, that kind of dish could be made. But taking that into account, there seemed to be no dissatisfaction on Chloe's face. Because if she knew that she had failed, there would be no way she didn't put on a disappointed face.

And Chloe wasn't such a bad chef as to not differentiate whether she had failed her dish or not. That's why it was more confusing for Jo Minjoon. How could she have such a light face after making a 6 points dish?

Jo Minjoon looked at the soup with doubting eyes. It was at that moment. Someone touched Jo Minjoon's back from behind.

“What are you doing and not seating?”

It was Kaya. She served the grilled scallops directly on a plate. So on the table were placed the soup, pasta and the main dish, the scallops. It could be said that it was closer to a Korean formal dinner than a course cooking.

They were eating by themselves so there was no need to keep the order of the serving. Jo Minjoon sat on the place. Marco put the dough in the oven and opened his mouth while walking towards the table.

“It looks like a buffet.”

Kaya smiled without saying a word. And Jo Minjoon looked at her dish. Maybe it was made with her usual skills, but her grilled scallops was 7 points. The exterior of it was seared like a custard pudding applied with butter.

However, what Jo Minjoon ate first was the potato soup. In the first place, this dish had the main role, so it was an obvious thing to eat it first.

The soup wasn't as thick as cream soup, but rather it was like korean [gamja ongsimi](#) or [samgyetang's](#)(삼계탕) soup. When he drank a spoonful of the brownish soup, the clear flavor and the scallions aroma roamed around the mouth.

It was tasty. But just that. A flavor where you seemed to have tried it elsewhere. It wasn't subtle nor strong, but the flavor was just at the middle of those.

“Wow Chloe. This is delicious.”

At the voice of Kaya, Jo Minjoon couldn't help but get surprised. Kaya was the type to not talk much, but she was also worse at doing compliments. That's why when Jo Minjoon saw that the soup was 6 points, he thought that Kaya would surely talk bad about the dish.

However, the results were the opposite. Jo Minjoon drank the soup with a dumbfounded face. This time, he also ate the mashed potato along with buttercups. It was just that much. It was good to eat it as a meal, but the strong impression of Chloe couldn't be felt as usual.

And at that moment, Jo Minjoon thought.

‘Why must I feel impressed by a dish?’

Maybe he was thinking about useless things. Thinking about it, Korean meat restaurants didn't receive those high points. Remembering the times when he was in Korea, he remembered that they were mostly 5 or 6 points.

But it didn't mean that the meat wasn't delicious. There was no one that was dissatisfied with the meat. It was good food. Although it was just roasted meat to say that it was cooking, but there would be nobody that would say that it wasn't food.

At that point, Jo Minjoon started to question the scoring system. At first, he thought that it was a system that scored the points of a food, like the name implied. But would that score represent everything of that dish? Because he thought like that, the word ‘cooking’ started to bother him.

“Minjoon? Why that expression? Is it not tasty?”

Jo Minjoon, that was immersed in his thoughts for a while, woke

up by Chloe's voice. She was checking him with a worried face. Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly. In that instant, many things passed through his head. It was about wanting to express honestly or not.

But if it was about this, he thought that it would be better to just let it pass. Because it wasn't just another thing, it was about cooking. Besides, he wondered that the reason Chloe got disqualified early on despite having good skills would be because of this. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"It is tasty. But honestly speaking it's just that. Of course, judging your dish this seriously between us is not so good, but I get a bit of regret. At the same time i'm a bit confused. It is certainly not a professional dish. But despite that, I don't get the feeling that it lacks something. This....."

"Is it not good like this?"

The one who replied to him wasn't Chloe, it was Kaya. She was licking her spoon like a candy, and continued speaking.

"It's simple and good. To add this and that to this dish would just make it excessive."

"I also think like that. But it's disappointing. Chloe. Cooking right here is for us to eat, but also to practice. Doesn't that mean that you are planning to cook this kind of dish in the next mission?"

"That's right but.....Is it no good?"

Chloe tilted her head and asked. He didn't want to say something bad to someone with such an honest face, but he had to do so because he was her friend. It was necessary for the survival of

Chloe. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“It’s hard to say, but first I’ll evaluate it. If you ask me about how I think about your dish, then I’m satisfied. And I’ll probably be able to eat it once a day and pretty deliciously at that. But if you ask me if this is the utmost of your skills, then my answer is no. Even if a chef with good skills puts frozen food in the microwave, then the result will be average. I think that it would be the same for this potato soup recipe, no, the potato soup itself.”

“Mm.. What you are trying to tell me... So it’s this? That potato soup is not a good dish to show my abilities with?”

“.....At least this potato soup is like that. It’s not that it’s tasty for the mouth, it is just eaten well. I think that it is closer to a familiar meal than course cooking.”

At those words, Chloe fell deep in her thoughts while touching her lips. Rather than saying that his words hurt her, it was more than a homework from her. But it was also a homework for Jo Minjoon. Actually, while Jo Minjoon was sharing his opinions with her, his voice wasn’t filled with confidence. It was because of the cooking score that appeared before.

That’s why it got all the more harder to reply for Chloe.

“Then, is potato soup a dish that shouldn’t be served in any restaurant? Because it doesn’t let you show your full skills or give a professional flavor?”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon couldn’t think of anything to reply. Was that really the case? Would a dish with no hope of

improvement be served in a restaurant? If there was, then who decided on that rule?

Jo Minjoon couldn't think of an answer. There was a time where he worked on a restaurant, but it was as the youngest chef. Only the word was chef, but actually there was no difference to being in charge of chores. There weren't many things he knew to pierce through a restaurant's physiology.

Saying the truth, Jo Minjoon wanted to agree at what Chloe had said. If there was a limit to cooking, and the limit to cooking would be decided because of that.... He thought that it was a really sad thing. It was the same like saying that every person, when born, would have different value with others.

“I don't know.”

In the end, what Jo Minjoon could say was just that. But Chloe didn't blame him for answering like that. Rather, she smiled brightly. It was a hospitable smile. It was a Chloe like face.

“Then let's think together. We have plenty of time.”

“.....Yeah. Let's.”

“First, let's eat the pasta. At this rate, it won't get cool, but will get soggy.”

Chloe smiled and raised her fork. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and brought the aglio e olio he had made to his mouth.



The flavor was a success. The spaghetti that was mixed with oil, gave a subtle garlic aroma along with the hot peperoncino flavor. And the main point was the saltiness. Personally, Jo Minjoon thought that the main point on giving flavor to the aglio e olio was salt. The feeling where you could vaguely feel the saltiness. It was a flavor which Koreans were bored with.

But Jo Minjoon thought that if they were participants to come to Grand Chef, then they would be able to feel this profound flavor amply. Indeed, on Chloe's face, a faint smile could be seen.

“It's a flavor that pushes and pulls.”

“I just made it to be like that. A fluttering flavor? That kind of sensation. Marco. What about you?”

“.....Honestly speaking, it needs more seasoning for me. I use to eat salty food.”

“Then put in some cheese that's over there. Then it will suit you.”

“I was about to.”

Marco wiped the sweat on his forehead and put some cheese in it. At that moment, the aroma of the cheese tickled his nose. Even if he was putting it in his dish, it was that much. Could it be the power of cheese? Jo Minjoon ignored the temptation coming from a corner of his heart and rolled the noodles in his fork. Aglio e olio becomes an entirely different dish in front of cheese. He wanted to keep believing that.

“It's lacking.”

Kaya suddenly said. But Jo Minjoon didn't get surprised. Because it was pretty normal for her to be grumbling in front of food. Rather, he was happy about her reaction. Her incredible tasting was a better ability than Jo Minjoon's system. Only she could grasp the entirety of the flavors structure after eating it.

Jo Minjoon asked.

“What is lacking?”

“Entire balance. I think that there's a lot of parsley powder in it, and the noodles and the oil aren't perfectly in sync. You should have poured more water. You made it too hurriedly.”

“Mm. I'll keep it in mind.”

He didn't feel bad. There would be cases where you started to hate the person that pointed out your mistakes. But Kaya was well aware of that, and pointed out things for Jo Minjoon. Thinking about that, he couldn't feel bad. At least, he wasn't someone with a small mind.

But at the same time he couldn't help but question it a little. They were both 6 points dishes. Chloe's potato soup, and Jo Minjoon's aglio e olio. But why didn't she point out anything about the potato soup, but pointed out the regretful parts of his aglio e olio?

However his question didn't last long. It couldn't. Kaya asked them with an anxious voice.

“Then start slowly eating my dish too. The flavor will get dispersed.”

Kaya looked at her scallops anxiously as if she was looking at a bedridden old man. Jo Minjoon laughed and put a scallop in his mouth.

The flavor was obviously delicious. Because Kaya’s skills didn’t run off to somewhere. In the case of scallops, if it got a little cold, then the flavor could be felt more clearly. The butter that was slightly about to get hard melting in one’s mouth, and the soft scallop like that woman’s lips were all satisfactory. Kaya asked with shining eyes.

“How is it?”

“It’s like always. There’s nothing to point out.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders and said. Kaya looked at Marco and Chloe. Chloe didn’t say anything and just smiled. It meant that it was delicious. At that moment Marco opened his mouth. Kaya got nervous and looked at him. However, what Marco said wasn’t related to her dish.

“I will now bring the souffle. It should be done.”

When Marco said that and came back, there was a chocolate souffle with white sugar powder that was like snow on his hands. Chloe said admiration words.

“Wow, Marco. Your breads are perfect even from the smell. Why did you come to Grand Chef? You should have gone to a Grand Party City or something of the sort.”

“.....But it doesn't exist.”

Marco said hopelessly. And then, sliced the souffle with a cake knife and served it on each plate.

Jo Minjoon got surprised while looking at the souffle. It was a quality he hadn't seen in a while. 8 points. Souffle was a really simple dish, but just like aglio e olio, the difference of the flavor was like heaven and earth depending on the chef, no in this case it was the pastry chef. It also meant that this dish was perfect to properly show Marco's skills.

How would it taste like? Jo Minjoon sliced a piece of the souffle with his fork. It was so soft to the point it couldn't even be compared to sponge cake, and while it was being ripped, it released hot steam. The steam was filled with chocolate aroma. Jo Minjoon brought that to his mouth slowly.

The sweet and soft flavor that roams through his mouth. It was a little bit sour and sticky, and that flavor that was felt through his tongue conquered his mouth. What he could do right now was laughing happily.

Suddenly, the worry about the scoring method was now far away.

## Chapter 32: A Well Made Dish And Good Food (3)

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He couldn't get asleep. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes trying to sleep, but ended up opening them. He glanced at his handphone and it was already midnight. He buried his face on the pillow, and in the end stood up from the place. He thought that laying like this would be wasting time.

The reason he didn't get sleepy was simple. Because of the case of the low score. Precisely speaking, it was a little different than the score. It was about the limits of cooking. Chloe's potato soup was perfect. If she added something more, then that dish would become something else. But would that potato soup remain as a sloppy 6 points?

“.....Stats window.”

[Jo Minjoon]

Cooking level: 6

Baking level: 4

Tasting level: 7

Decorations level: 5

Jo Minjoon kept looking at his stat window. Excluding the decorations level that went up by one when he teamed up with Kaya, there was nothing different.

“Level 7..... When will I reach it?”

As he was mumbling, Jo Minjoon’s face froze. Since when did he start to care about his level this much? He started to think that at one point, the dishes he made weren’t for cooking, but for raising his cooking level.

But he couldn’t help but be like that. He was different to Chloe or Kaya. He couldn’t ignore the score that was being shown in front of him.

‘Even so, the potato soup.....’

He started to remember the flavor. It was thick and stable. It was well cooked so there wasn’t even a trace of a bad smell coming from the potato. And also the buttercup aroma. Even though it wasn’t splendid, it was delicious. It was fun.

Also, Kaya, who reached the top level 10 in tasting, didn’t point anything wrong with the dish. Was it because it was the best the potato soup could get? Or because the potato soup itself was a good dish?

The cooking score was perfect for the system. How much creativity was used while cooking that dish, how stably a skill was used, how harmonious the ingredients became, etc. It was a score taking into account all of that.

A dish with high cooking score was certainly a good dish. However, a dish with a low cooking score was a bad one? Jo Minjoon couldn’t stop thinking about that.

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. His head hurt. And the way he relieved stress was quite simple. To eat.

He opened the door, and the hallway was really dark. Jo Minjoon walked the hallway guided by the flashlight of his handphone. His destination was the pantry, and the kitchen.

As he reached the kitchen, there was an unexpected guest. It was Anderson. It seemed like he was making some gravy. He put onions, pumpkins, etc. in the boiling water and looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon waved his hand expressionlessly.

“Hi.”

“.....What are you doing here?”

“What do you mean? I came to cook.”

Jo Minjoon replied as if he was being asked something obvious. Anderson didn't particularly like Jo Minjoon, but it was also the same otherwise. After the first broadcast ended and after what Jo Minjoon said about Kaya winning, he still remembered what Anderson had told him back then. He was beating around the bush, but in the end it meant that first, he had to have some skills to talk.

Of course, Jo Minjoon understood the hidden meaning. He wasn't someone who liked people that disliked him.

The conversation ended with just that. Jo Minjoon went to the

pantry and looked for ingredients. Instead of saying that he wanted to practice cooking, he needed food to fill his belly. He wanted to make some [kimchi jjigae with pork moksal](#), but there was no kimchi in the pantry.

‘Should I ask for it later?’

He thought like that, but it was pointless. Although it was a representing item in Korea, it didn’t work in the world. Precisely speaking, only half of it worked. The reason was because of the fishy smell left. In conclusion, it was a difficult ingredient to use in this kind of competition. Even if he did ask for some kimchi, in the end, he was going to use it to make the things he used to eat. To ask some to eat by himself was being a nuisance.

Because he couldn’t make kimchi jjigae, the next thing he thought of was doenjang jjigae. In the pantry, there were all kinds of things related to condiments of the whole world. There was of course [doenjang](#). Although a commercial one of course, but the flavor wasn’t bad. Rather, Jo Minjoon favoured commercial doenjang. Compared to the homemade ones, it’s colour was lighter, and the flavor was as light as the colour.

When cooking doenjang jjigae with commercial doenjang, there was only one disadvantage. That the more you cooked it, the more flavor it lost. However, it was a disadvantage he didn’t need to take into account when you were going to eat it once like this time.

Jo Minjoon handled the anchovies. To say that he was going to handle it, it was a rather simple process. To remove the dung and the guts. Depending on whether you did this or not, the sour flavor changed drastically. And Jo Minjoon wasn’t the type to roughly



prepare what he was going to eat.

The next step after handling the anchovies was simple. To put the anchovies and kelp in the water, boil it and make the gravy. Depending on the person, they could fry meat to make the gravy, but Jo Minjoon didn't like the combination of doenjang jjigae and meat. He didn't like the flavor of the doenjang to be contaminated with the oil coming out from the meat. It was his philosophy that doenjang jjigae needed to be cool and clean.

Jo Minjoon chopped the radish, onions, potatoes, pumpkin, mushrooms and tofu to the size of dices. Anderson glanced at him and asked.

“What are you making?”

“Doenjang jjigae. Do you know about it?”

“No. Looking at the ingredient, it looks like japanese miso soup. Is it tasty?”

“I wonder. I don't think that it will suit your tastes.”

Jo Minjoon replied displeased. Korean people couldn't notice it, but people around the world felt the flavor to be really thick. It was also the same when they tried the sweet and light japanese doenjang jjigae. So would they like the korean one? He wondered if Anderson would enjoy doenjang jjigae.

Anderson didn't keep talking to him. Jo Minjoon took out the anchovies and the kelp and put in the doenjang and chilli powder. When the soup was moderately done, he put in the vegetables he sliced. And after he boiled it for some time, putting the tofu and

sliced green chili was the end.

The doenjang jjigae was completed. The score was 6 points. However he didn't mind. In the first place, it wasn't a dish made hoping that it ends with a good score. In the first place, cooking doenjang jjigae with commercial doenjang was difficult to get a high score. Even getting 6 points was good enough.

It was at that moment when he put the instantaneous rice in the microwave. Anderson came to him and opened his mouth.

“Let's share.”

“.....What?”

“You even shared the catfish dish with Kaya. Why, you don't want to with me?”

“Rather than I don't want to..... You don't like me that much.”

Jo Minjoon didn't hit around the bush and answered directly. Anderson shrugged his shoulders.

“It's true that I don't like you. But there's no reason to not like your dish. That doenjang jjigae thing, it's the first time i see it. And I have to eat what I see for the first time to ease my curiosity.”

“.....If you say it like that. Then bring yours too.”

At those words Anderson laughed.

“Mine is going to taste better. Won't you get discouraged by it?”

“You have to try it to know.”

Jo Minjoon replied while snorting. Actually, he had the rights to act like that. Because Anderson's dish, the tomato chicken stew, was merely 6 points.

Jo Minjoon and Anderson sat on a table facing each other. The first thing Jo Minjoon ate was the doenjang jjigae. The flavor of the doenjang jjigae he didn't eat for a while was exceptional. Because of the chili powder and the green chili, it was spicy. And the unique coolness of the anchovy gravy passed through his throat cleanly.

The flavor of eating tofu, pumpkin and soup along with rice was perfect. Honestly speaking, it was incomparable to the dishes of Chloe, and Kaya.

And now, Jo Minjoon ate the tomato chicken stew. The aroma of butter could be felt in the soup, and the sweet flavor of the tomato could be felt. The main point of tomato chicken stew was saving the sweet flavor, and this stew was one that was really sweet.

However, it wasn't in the level of the doenjang jjigae he just ate. Of course, it was the same for Anderson. Anderson frowned after trying the doenjang jjigae.

"It doesn't feel fresh."

"It's that kind of dish."

"It would be a difficult dish to use in a mission."

".....About that."

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. Anderson flinched when he looked at Jo Minjoon that seemed to want to talk about something serious.

“The dishes in a top restaurant. So the dishes made with the best technique and ingredients, and normal homemade food. Will you be able to evaluate both of the dishes? No, I’ll speak more directly. What holds more value and what doesn’t?”

“What are you talking about so suddenly?”

“I just thought of that. That what people use to eat isn’t made by professional skills nor thought about the harmony of the ingredients. But just because of that do they hold no value? I’m curious.”

Anderson didn’t reply. He just looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon took one more spoon of the doenjang jjigae and looked at it. And talked in a silent voice.

“Suddenly, my mind is a mess. If a well made dish is good food....No, it’s not. Precisely speaking, a dish made without outstanding skills can become good food. It’s confusing.”

Anderson didn’t say a thing and fell in his thoughts. It seemed that it wasn’t an easy question to answer. However, when he opened his mouth, the words that flowed through his lips were quite deep.

“If it was delicious for the person eating it, then isn’t that good food?”

“.....Huh?”

“It’s like the hot dog made in the streets. If the person that ate it says that it was delicious, then it is good food. Of course, I know that what you are trying to say is a little different. I know that you are not talking about the idea, but about the quality. But I think that the basis is that. Look at this.”

Anderson pointed the table in front of him. A tomato chicken stew, and doenjang jjigae. It was a simple table.

“We can make even more luxurious and splendid dishes. But we are eating this simple dishes. And it won’t be different for an epicurean. The person who checked the searing point of a steak in a top restaurant, could be eating frozen pizza and think that it is delicious.”

“.....But you can’t place that frozen pizza on a dish.”

“Of course not.”

“In the afternoon I tried Chloe’s potato soup. It was delicious. But I thought that it was a dish that couldn’t be presented in a top class restaurant. Because it lacked splendour. It would be better to cook it with one’s family. It was a good dish. Even so, it can’t be presented in a top restaurant. ....Isn’t it weird? It is delicious, it certainly is delicious food.....”

“Hold on.”

Anderson raised his hand and interrupted him. Jo Minjoon looked at him. Anderson spoke with his usual calm face.

“Aren’t you mistaken about something?”

“What?”

“The flavor isn’t it all in cooking. It’s just a part of it. The shape, ingredients. At times, the ingredients fees, the chef’s fame, interior, all of that is included at what the customers pay for. But, a dish that contains potato soup you usually eat? Do you think that it will be able to please them?”

Jo Minjoon couldn’t reply back. Anderson continued.

“It must be a dish that can’t be imitated at home. And the better the quality of the ingredients, then, the better. The reason cooking is not the same as homemade cooking is because of that. Homemade cooking can be done by anyone if they practice a little.”

“Then how do you think the flavor is given?”

“Isn’t that a question that can be answered just by looking at this table?”

At those words, Jo Minjoon looked at the doenjang jjigae and tomato chicken stew. He was staring for a while and soon, Jo Minjoon smiled brightly.

“Yes. That’s right! A well done dish and good food are completely different things!”

He started to think about many things in his head. The [naengmyeon](#)(냉면) he ate after finishing his finals, or the [tonkatsu](#)(돈까스) he ate when he got admitted to the army, the jelly made by Jessie....

It wasn’t that he realized it just know. He knew it all along. Just

that he wasn't conscious of it. Looking at the system's score, he forgot what cooking meant, and what was food.

The cooking score, was in the end, the technique used while cooking. If a better technique was used, then the quality of the food and the level couldn't be helped but be high. So it couldn't be helped that the quality of the food and the level of it was almost similar. Only then could Jo Minjoon realize it.

The situation wasn't any different. This was Grand Chef. It was a place where he showed his skills, and the dish with high cooking score could get good compliments.

However, Jo Minjoon's way of thinking changed. Just because the cooking score was low, it didn't mean that it was bad. Of course, while the cooking score was higher, the flavor would get more complex and more refined. Because cooking techniques existed for that.

But just because it wasn't complex, and wasn't refined didn't mean that it was bad. Just like how he yearned for doenjang jjigae right now, at times, that simplicity reached even deeper. Perhaps, a 5 points dish could taste better than the 10 points dish.

Jo Minjoon stood up. He walked towards Anderson and shook his hand. Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon with a perplexed face. Jo Minjoon said seriously.

“Thank you. Anderson. I really thank you. It was a good counseling.”

“Wha, what? So suddenly..”

“I think that I would be able to sleep well. I say it once again but, thank you. I won’t forget about today.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and left the place. Anderson looked confusedly at the back of Jo Minjoon. After a while, his eyes looked back at the table. Anderson grumbled.

“At least wash the dishes, crazy bastard.....”



# Chapter 33: A Dish Made By A Chef (1)

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In Kaya's childhood, there was not even a spoon worth of peace.

Also she didn't have a father. Her mother, Grace, said that her father left the house when she was young. And when Kaya became 6 years old, a man appeared next to Grace. She doesn't remember all the details, only that his eyes were shockingly deep and blue. Grace said that he was her father. Because Grace's eyes were brown, and Kaya's were blue, she didn't even doubt that he was her real father.

Of course, that trust didn't get her any rewards. One day, that fake father fought with Grace inside the house and broke all of the furnitures, and after that, he didn't show himself. He had left. After leaving a living being inside the mother's womb.

She doesn't remember the details, but she did remember that Grace was really sensitive and suffering at that moment. Maybe, the existence of Kaya was what drove her to keep working for her sake, but was she not enough? Kaya still remembered the scene where her mother was crying alone with her face buried on a pillow in a dark room.

And at some time, the thing that soothed Grace wasn't her tears, but alcohol. Fortunately there were no injections. She would mostly drink cheap beer until she fell asleep because of the alcohol.

Was it because of the alcohol? Or was it because of the bad luck that followed her everywhere? The child Grace gave birth to after

the intense pain, Kaya's sister, was disabled. Cerebral paralysis. Looking at that child who couldn't even move her body as she wanted, no, that couldn't even make a proper expression, she felt that her world was being painted with dirty ink.

After coming back from elementary school, she had to go to the market instead of her house. It wasn't that she hated that. Just like any child from any unlucky family, Kaya too, couldn't help but mature early on. She was poor and didn't have any proper skills, and her mother that wasn't even selling things, but was cleaning the market. A disabled sister that if left alone, would have no way to live on. To grumble about her life, reality was too harsh.

But not because of that did she take life as a happy thing. It was a life where she was resigned to live properly and was being dragged. Her character was harsh, and her mouth was foul. Looking at the annoyed faces of the merchants, and looking at her friends of the same age running and playing, the awl in her heart got sharper. And that awl even made her drop out from middle school.

“The only thing I can properly do is cooking.”

In front of the camera, Kaya lotus was opening her mouth. Martin asked silently.

“How did you start cooking?”

“I wanted to eat delicious things. Like I told you before, our house is poor. I brought back ingredients that couldn't be sold to the customers to the house and cooked them. At first, it was a shocking flavor. But fortunately, I had talent. Because I wanted to

make the flavor at least a little bit better, I ran all around the place, and I got to know how to make it taste better. My mother and sister liked it.”

“You must have been happy.”

“Happy..... Yes, of course I was happy. But putting aside all of those feelings, cooking was like a respirator for me. Precisely speaking, it was like that when I ate delicious food. Taking care of my ill sister, helping my mother, the illness that makes your body ache like an old man. And a bite of a delicious thing. I thought that was the only reason for me to live, it was a time that I could talk like that.”

Putting aside that she was talking about that calmly, it's contents were dark. It couldn't even be said that it was an exaggeration. If you have lived that kind of life since small, then you could only think like that.

“I dropped out from middle school halfway. Because the medicine fee for my sister was really expensive and we were really tight on money with just that. In the first place, I wouldn't be able to go to college if I kept on going to school, so I just wanted to work.”

“.....It must have been a difficult decision.”

“Difficult decision? I wonder. The moment I dropped, I even felt a sense of freedom. Even so, that wasn't a place where I could be in. I wanted to rip people's mouths when they were in a bad mood just because of puberty when they didn't even have any kind of problems in their house. You saw batman right? The mouth of the joker is ripped. Yeah, like that.”

Kaya pulled the end of her lips with her fingers and laughed

while snapping it. Martin laughed and gave hand signals in his back. He had to cut that part. This excessive behavior wouldn't be accepted well by the viewers. Martin changed subjects. If it was this much about the past, then he had gotten enough.

“Is there anyone you are close with?”

“No.”

Kaya replied without thinking for even a minute. Because of that, Martin couldn't help but get perplexed. He didn't think that she would obediently name someone, but for her to say that she didn't have any that bluntly, he didn't even imagine it. Martin opened his mouth.

“No, isn't there some people you are close with? Like Marco, Minjoon, Chloe. Aren't you close with them?”

“Yes. I'm not.”

It was yet a firm answer. Martin laughed awkwardly and kept talking.

“No, why.... Nowadays you are rather close. You eat together, and hang together. That's being close.”

“Is the word 'close' that light? At least we don't know a thing about each other, we have to perfectly trust each other to be close.”

“Then does that mean that you are in the process of getting closer?”

“That.....”

Kaya frowned as if something was bothering her. Her bright lips were shut for a while, and then opened. However the words that flowed through her weren't the words Martin had wanted.

“Let's go with another question.”

“.....Is there a reason that it makes you difficult to answer?”

However Martin was experienced. If you got a hold of something, there was no way you could let it go. Kaya looked at him for a minute. Kaya just glared at him. But a broadcasting PD was someone who had gone through all kinds of things and rose to that position. Martin's life also wasn't an easy one for a teen to look at him funnily. In the end, Kaya let out a sigh, and replied with a softer voice.

“Fine. I will talk. It's because it's embarrassing.”

“You are at that age. To show affection to someone else.....”

“No. It's not that.”

Kaya interrupted Martin. Looking at the dumfounded expression, Kaya bit her lips and said.

“The process of getting closer. I had many people being on that stage. 18. Life seems short but it's not really. I have met venomous people and also good people. The process of getting closer, I had it. And there's not a time where I did get close. Even though I pretended to be close, in the end, they all left.”

“... ..”

Martin couldn't reply anything back. He knew that at this moment, he had to ask something for the sake of the broadcast. But Kaya's eyes were really sad. She seemed like a little child that just became an adult. To ask her to reveal more of her past was a really cruel thing.

"Perhaps it's because they think that my character is poor, or there could be other things. Even so, the conclusion is the same. That I'm not someone who just gets close to anybody. But just because I say that we are a bit close right now, whether it's a process or not, it just gets messed up again."

Martin, and the author that was next to him couldn't say a thing. Kaya let out a smile. It was a provocative and confident smile, but Martin felt that smile to be empty.

"Saying that it's embarrassing, you got that right?"

—

After the interview ended, Kaya slowly walked towards the waiting room. She was quite sensitive for having shown a little bit of her hurt side. If she was like this, you wouldn't know if she would curse you from head to toe only by talking to her. In front of the waiting room, Kaya stopped her steps and opened her mouth.

"Calm down Kaya Lotus. You came to get out of that swamp. You can do it. You are strong. You...."

Kaya stopped her mumbling. The door opened and Jo Minjoon was coming out. Did he hear it? No, the door was closed. Was this door not able to block this much noise? Kaya glared at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon flinched and looked at her.

“What?”

“.....It’s nothing.”

Kaya replied without strength and went inside the waiting room. Jo minjoon frowned a little and looked at her back. He was worried about her but he couldn’t chase her back. Now was the time for the interviewing.

As he was walking towards the interviewing room, the casting crew were really in a low mood. The female author was sniffing while wiping off her tears, and the cameraman’s face was gloomier than ever. Jo Minjoon sat on his place and asked Martin.

“What kind of interview was it that the atmosphere got this down?”

“.....Well, we listened a bit of Kaya’s story. You know about her past, right?”

“Well, just the things that were broadcasted.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders and replied. Martin let out a sigh.

“Well, it’s just like you see. We listened a bit more of her story. If you are sensible enough, it was a story you couldn’t help but shed

tears.”

“Looking that you are fine, it seems that you aren’t sensitive.”

“How could I not be? It’s just that my tears are lacking compared to my sensitivity.”

Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly and shut his mouth. Martin also smiled and said.

“Right. Are you confident on the next mission?”

“I must know what the mission is about to be able to say something. Honestly, saying something scares me. You don’t know if I would get hit like last time after speaking some brief words.”

He was hitting around the bush, but he was talking about the ending of the first episode, about Kaya winning. Martin put an awkward face and scratched his head. Jo Minjoon looked at him and said.

“You said that you wanted me to win, so I thought that even if you couldn’t express it you would cheer for me in your heart. So was that a service announcement?”

“I personally do cheer for you. However i’m a PD. If you gave me such a good broadcasting material, it would be bad manners to not receive it.”

Martin said while smiling. He was a really wise guy. Jo Minjoon stared at him for a while and soon, laughed.

“Those are right words. I understand.”



“Let’s proceed with the interviewing. Minjoon. The first episode was broadcasted and from one of the viewers reaction there was something like this. ‘Is there no way to be a success with cooking in Korea? Why did he come to the US?’ What do you think about this?”

“I wonder. Personally speaking I think that the first question is rather sensitive to answer. As for the latter, it’s because of my selfishness and adoration. Looking at the past season of Grand Chef, I received admiration. I got a thought that I wanted to stand in this place. Because it’s a good opportunity and a good stage.”

“Even if that was the case, it’s not normal to come all the way over here with just that as an excuse. The way I see it, you are the only case that I know that has come because of that.”

Because he was speaking like that, Jo Minjoon got a thought that he was indeed a special case. Normally, if he chose the road to cooking, he wouldn’t have come all the way to the US. Jo Minjoon thought that the reason for that was because of his impatience and his craving. He also didn’t want to be cleaning on a kitchen. The meaning wasn’t that deep, but the motivation didn’t need to be deep.

“I would be grateful if you thought of me like someone with passion.”

“Well, then let’s go with the next question. Then what about what you had said previously? About Kaya winning.”

“You sir, know about that. That there are more words to what I have said. If the person who had edited it asks me like that then it’s a bit troublesome.”

“Oh, was there some more words?”

Martin made a quite surprised gesture and looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“I am going to win. I am determined to do so.”

“Okey. I got it. Lately, you have been close to Chloe, Kaya and Marco. You got along quite well, but are you really close?”

“I think we are. At least, that’s what I think of.”

“What was the trigger of you getting closer?”

“I wonder. Kaya.... For Kaya, I remember that we shared our dishes after the mission and got close after that, for Marco, we got close because we were both from New York, and for Chloe on the team mission. But this is not broadcasting material, is it?”

At those words, Martin smiled humorously.

“That’s right. It’s better for the interview to be more personal. With that meaning Minjoon, let’s talk about your scandal.”

“.....Scandal?”

“It’s a report from mister A. There’s word that after you finished cooking, you passed on the dishes to wash..... Is that true?”

Jo Minjoon forced a laugh.

“I will make no comments about that.”

## Chapter 34: A Dish From A Chef (2)

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After the interview concluded, Jo Minjoon went to the waiting room. Usually, he felt that the interviews were pointless, but today specially, he felt that it was even more so. Actually, a part of it was because he was thinking of other things.

As soon as he opened to door, he looked for Kaya. However, she couldn't be seen anywhere. What he could actually see was Anderson's gloomy face. Jo Minjoon grinned and said.

“Hello, mister A.”

“.....Shameless bastard.”

“I apologized last time. It wasn't on purpose. No, would I pass it on to you after thanking you?”

“In conclusion, you did.”

“That's true but....”

He had a gloomy face, but looking at him conversing well with Jo Minjoon, the participants couldn't help but get surprised. Because he wasn't the kind of person to get along with the other participants. He could be seen as a male version of Kaya Lotus. But for them to be conversing that lightly, it could only be unexpected.

And that was the same for Chloe and Marco. Chloe placed her chin on Jo Minjoon's shoulder and smiled. Her black hair with a trace of orange tickled his neck like a foxtail. Chloe opened her mouth.

“What’s this? When did you get so close?”

“Don’t get that disgusting misunderstanding. Because we are not close.”

Anderson grumbled like that and sat on a sofa that was in a corner. Jo Minjoon tapped the chin of Chloe that was placed in his shoulder. Chloe lifted her chin and said.

“Did you do well in the interview?”

“Is there something to do good? You just have to answer what you are questioned.”

“It’s because you couldn’t do that, that a scandal was made.”

Jo Minjoon inflated his cheeks without saying anything, and gulped down the air. There was particularly nothing he could reply. Chloe was right. He did think that he had spoken well, but he was the kind of person that couldn’t differentiate between what was right to say and what wasn’t.

‘Is it because of the habit when I used to teach my students?’

He felt sour. Jo Minjoon sat on the sofa and looked at Chloe. Then asked.

“And Kaya?”

“I thought why weren’t you asking. She went out before. She felt uncomfortable. I think that she was going to get some fresh air.”

“Really?”

“Is there a problem?”

“No. It’s not a problem. Just so.”

Jo Minjoon spoke. Marco, that was seated next to him opened his mouth.

“Is there a need to be worried about her? She’s a strong girl.”

“Yes. She is indeed a strong girl. But she is a child.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and let out a sigh. Even so, he was still a teacher. Just like he acted with Jessie, he couldn’t help but feel sad while looking at Kaya. Because it wasn’t that he wanted to teach just because of the job.

He was normally that kind of person. To butt in? It could be expressed like that, but he was someone that didn’t like to see immature children suffering.

But just because of that, it would be a funny thing if he went and consoled or advised her. In Jessie’s case, the situation turned out like that so he could say something, but Kaya’s situation was different. The environment, and her character. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“How much time is left until the mission starts?”

“There would be at least 3 people left to interview. So I think that 15 minutes. You are going to look for her?”

At Marco's question, Jo Minjoon shook his head. It wasn't something he should butt in. There was silence between them for a minute. The one who broke that silence was Chloe and her question.

“What do you think the next mission will be?”

—

“This mission's theme will be ‘vegetarian’.”

Emily announced the theme with a lively voice. Jo Minjoon just looked at her. Emily smiled brightly and made eye contact with each of the participants. And then continued speaking.

“When you are operating a restaurant, vegetarians always become a homework for us. And between vegetarians, there are various kinds. Of course, they don't eat meat and fish, and even eggs and milk, and only eat vegetables. Those are vegans. Vegans that are only allowed to eat dairy lactose. They are uncountable. What you people have to do, is to consider us, the judges, as lactose eaters. Saying it with simple words, you can't use any kinds of meat excluding eggs and dairy products. You are also prohibited from using fish and poultry.”

Those were some picky conditions. But because he could use eggs and dairy products, it would be a bit easier, but being prohibited from using meat varieties was a huge condition. It would be an especially hard mission for the westerners that mainly ate meat.

But it wasn't for Jo Minjoon. Because he was Korean. And Korea was one of the countries that was represented for its vegans. There were many vegetarian related recipes in his head. But the problem was in another thing.

'7 points. Should I mind it?'

The idea he had about cooking score had changed for a long time. Of course, if the cooking score was high, then his dish would also be good. But he got to know that because of a low score, the quality wouldn't drop.

Of course, the judges normally preferred high score dishes, so the higher the score all the more better. But the problem was that there were two recipes he had thought. One was 7 points, and the other 6. His head was telling him to choose the 7 points dish, but his heart chose the 6 points one.

The recipe of the 7 points one was quite simple. You steamed white broccoli, cauliflower. Mixed paprika and butter, applied it on the cauliflower and roasted it. And sprinkling bread powder, herbs, and etc. was the end of it. At first glance, it was quite a simple recipe, but the roasting process needed dedication and skill.

And the recipe of the 6 points was one which he was quite accustomed to. It was a recipe copied from a dish that was normally eaten in Korean temples. It was a cabbage roll that contained sliced eggs, tofu, mushrooms, and herbs. On top of that, he wanted to put a raw egg in the [bibimbap](#)(비빔밥), and wanted to present [gamjajeon with chives](#)(감자부추전), and [perilla seeds miyeokguk](#)(들깨미역국) in the same table.

It wasn't because he wanted to present a Korean cuisine. Although the score was 6, it was because it was an usual dish in Korea. But for the judges, it would be a new thing. It was that kind of calculation.

Even before he could organize his thoughts in his head, Alan opened his mouth.

"This mission will be an individual one. You have to take full responsibility of your dish and make it."

Nobody replied back. Because they were already busy thinking of the recipe they were going to use. Joseph said with a calm voice.

"We will give you 5 minutes to think up your recipe. Think of a vegan recipe in that time. Also, the cooking time will be 60 minutes."

Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts. If he took into account the flavor and the nutrients, he thought that it would be better to present various dishes in one table. If there was something bothering him, then it would be the estimated 6 points. But he couldn't depend on the system all the time. Jo Minjoon wasn't a gamer that played cooking games, but rather, a chef. And his chef subconsciousness was telling him to choose the 6 points recipe.

Jo Minjoon checked at his surroundings. There were a total of 21 people including him. And they were all participating seriously and passionately in this program. It was rather hurting to his pride. Even if it was a strength he had obtained, he didn't like



himself for being looking at the numbers next to those kinds of people.

‘Okay. Let’s do it my way this time. I’m also a chef.’

The system wasn’t a loyal object. It was a tool, and he had to utilize it. The moment he was influenced by the score, then at that moment it wouldn’t be Jo Minjoon cooking, but the system doing it for him.

It was at that moment. The buzzer rang. It was the buzzer that signaled the start of the cooking. Joseph opened his mouth and yelled.

“60 minutes! Start now!”

Jo Minjoon didn’t waste a minute and went to the pantry. The ingredients he had to pick were simple. Seaweed, perilla seeds, rice, eggs, various vegetables and fruits.

The first thing he had to do was the rice. Jo Minjoon washed the rice and threw the water, and then filled the pot again with water and kept it away. They didn’t have an electric cooker, so he had to use a pressure cooker instead. In the first place, the electric cooker was only used in Korea or in Japan. It was a fairly unfamiliar tool overseas. Even if it was Grand Chef and they had many ingredients and tools, it was an exception for the electric cooker.

After putting the rice to cook, next was the perilla seed

miyeokguk. The first thing he handled was obviously the seaweed. Jo Minjoon washed it cleanly with cold water, and then, squeezed it out. After that, was the perilla seeds. Jo Minjoon grated the perilla seeds in the rice water.

The next step was simple. Jo Minjoon fried the seaweed in the perilla oil, and after putting perilla seed powder, rice water and diced garlic in a pot, he closed the lid. The reason he didn't use instant rice and prepared the rice this way was because of this reason. Because he couldn't use anchovy broth in a vegan dish. The rice water was insufficient, but it would play the role of broth.

Seasoning it after it was almost done was enough. Jo Minjoon closed the lid and prepared for the next thing. Gamjajeon, cabbage roll. The first thing he had to handle was the cabbage roll. It was better to make the gamjajeon last because of its crunchiness.

First, Jo Minjoon simmered the cabbage in a water that was mixed with vinegar and salt. After that, he sliced the vegetables long, and after taking out the water of the tofu, he squashed it. There couldn't be water left on the tofu. Because when you ate it, the water left in it could soak the ingredients in your stomach.

It was at that moment. Joseph approached Jo Minjoon and just observed him working. Jo Minjoon too, didn't mind Joseph and ripped the cabbage. Eventually, it was Emily that was looking them who asked as if she was bothered.

“Joseph. Why are you just looking like that?”

“Because I'm curious. I think that Jo Minjoon isn't trying to

make one dish, but an asian table meal.”

“Hmm..... Will you have enough time?”

Emily asked, but Jo Minjoon didn't reply. Emily laughed awkwardly. Jo Minjoon was completely focused on the countertop. In the first place, he couldn't even listen any voices. Rather than saying that he was anxious, he was committed.

The difficulty of making a table meal was that you had to cook various dishes at the same time. Even if you were concentrated in one thing, you had to check the state of the other dishes. It wasn't in vain that housewives yelled 'ah!' in the middle of cooking, to turn their attention to the cooking that was burning in the frying pan. Of course, the cause of it in Korea would be more because they were focused in watching TV rather than being bad chefs.

It had already passed 30 minutes. Jo Minjoon took out the cabbage from the steamer and put tofu, mushrooms, sliced eggs, etc. inside of it. And after putting coriander, basil and other things in it, the flavor was clearly more delicious.

But it wasn't a completely good flavor. Because the only seasoning put was the salt, and there was no meat. But it was certainly a food that made you feel good. The cabbage juice flowed in his mouth like juice, and the aroma of the herbs and coriander roamed in his mouth like the mojito's lime aroma.

The cooking score was 6. But it was an obvious thing. Because in this kind of cooking, there were no particularly special cooking methods.

He thought about roasting the cabbage roll in perilla seed oil and soy sauce, but if he did that, the light flavor would disappear in an instant. Jo Minjoon just sliced the roll and served it in a plate.

When he checked the miyeokguk, the flavor of the seaweed and garlic was felt really deeply. The feeling of the perilla seeds that roamed at the tip of his tongue was good, and the flavor was also good. Jo Minjoon seasoned it with soy sauce and salt. And closed the lid once again. He had to boil the miyeokguk like this until he presented it to the judges. Because the softer the seaweed, then the better.

He also checked the rice and it was already cooked. It was a perfectly cooked rice. The species of the rice was calrose. So compared to the white rice that was eaten in Korea, the flavor was a bit lacking, but that could be fixed with sesame oil.

Jo Minjoo sliced the herbs, lettuce, pumpkin, carrots, etc. In the United States, no, in America, they didn't eat plants as herbs, like in Korea. In Korea, it was mostly eaten as herbs. Because of that, Jo Minjoon thought that the bibimbap he was making right now with the vegetables he was using would be felt more freshly.

## Chapter 35: A Dish Made By A Chef (3)

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First, Jo Minjoon poured some sesame oil in the rice, and mixed the gochujang(고추장) and doenjang on a 1-1 ratio and mixed it with the rice. Normally, what differentiated korean bibimbap was this process. To already have mixed the sauce with the rice, or to present it separately. At times, the sauce was used as garnish.

There was a reason Jo Minjoon mixed the sauce beforehand. The first was because this was a mission. To let the judges to do the seasoning as they pleased, he didn't know what kinds of words they would tell them. And basically, Jo Minjoon didn't really like to present gochujang or sesame oil separately in a korean dish. Because he thought that a chef from a restaurant was the one who had to complete the dish with his own hands. If it was completed by the hands of the customer, then it was pointless. That was Jo Minjoon's way of thinking.

Secondly, it was because of the cleanliness. There were many cases where the vegetables or the meat that were used as garnish would rip and crumple when you mixed the sauce. That sight was one that made you not want to eat it.

After placing the steaming bibimbap in a small plate, Jo Minjoon placed the entire plate in a bigger and flatter one. Near the round plate bibimbap, were various garnishes placed as flower petals. And placing the yolk on top of the rice, was the end. Jo Minjoon looked at the bibimbap.

[Bibimbap]

Freshness: 94%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 6/10

6 points. It was as expected. Jo Minjoon didn't get shaken and looked at the time. 17 minutes. It was enough to make the gamjajeon.

Jo Minjoon grabbed some potatoes and started to grate them. He put the potatoes in a sieve to take off the moisture and sliced some chives and red chili. The reason he couldn't call this a temple dish.

[God's five vegetables](#) (오신채). Chives, korean wild chives, green onions, garlic and [heunggo](#) (흥거). These five vegetables were prohibited from being eaten in temples. And he had already used two of them. Garlic was used in the miyeokguk, and the chives was used in the gamjajeon. But of course, the theme wasn't even temple cooking, so there was no need to pay it any heed. What was important right now was the flavor and the nutrients.

Jo Minjoon put flour on the grated potatoes, and mixed after putting in the chives and the red chili. And then, brought it to the hot frying pan. He had to use a small amount of cooking oil. If he put too much, not only the edges, but also the center would be burnt like like a cookie and losing all of it's stickiness.

But because of that, he couldn't put in too little. Because the gamjajeon could stick to the pan and the shape would break.

Fortunately, Jo Minjoon cooked it better than ever.

[Chives gamjajeon]

Freshness: 92%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 6/10

6 points. Jo Minjoon's eyes twitched. He didn't even have 2 minutes left. He served the miyeokguk in a bowl. Westerners weren't really familiar with ingredients like seaweed, but they wouldn't be able to not eat it being a judge in a cooking program and such. Also, he added perilla seeds powder at the last minute just in case. Of course, perilla was also an ingredient westerners weren't familiar with, but it could save the flavor of miyeokguk a little.

Jo Minjoon placed the plates on the tray. Perilla miyeokguk, chives gamjajeon, cabbage roll, and bibimbap.

An unexpected thing happened at that time. The state windows that were over the plates flinched, and a bigger and clear window appeared over it. Jo Minjoon looked at that situation dumbfoundedly. Soon, another window popped up in front of his eyes.

[You made a harmonious korean table meal. It's composition belongs to a certain theme.]

[A new function that let's you evaluate multiple dishes at a time

‘composition score’ has been added.]

[The skill ‘comprehension towards korean cuisine’ mastery has increased.]

[Will you check the score of the composition?]

Yes / No

Jo Minjoon still looked at it perplexed. It was at that moment. A new window appeared before him.

[Jo Minjoon’s vegan korean meal.]

List: Bibimbap, perilla miyeokguk, cabbage roll, chives gamjajeon.

Average cooking score: 6/10

Composition score: 7/10

Evaluation: It’s a meal made for the vegans. It’s characterized for it’s graceful plating and clean flavor. So it’s a good meal to have without any burdens.

Jo Minjoon’s eyes twitched. A new function appeared. Even before any emotions could surge up, the buzzer rang along Alan’s voice.

“Everybody hands off! The time is over!”

Alan looked at everybody expressionlessly. Jo Minjoon gulped. The dice has been rolled. Could this meal that was made by his own colours move the judges hearts? Jo Minjoon checked his surroundings. He saw various and different dishes. Ratatouille,



lasagna, Cuba sandwich, etc.

Thump. He felt it clearly that his heart was beating. Jo Minjoon licked his lips. Even if he didn't do that, he couldn't do anything about his nervousness. The reason he could stay calm and composed when he was being evaluated was because of the faith he had in the cooking score. However, he got to know that the cooking score wasn't an absolute thing. And right now, the score of these dishes was only 6 points.

What he could trust in right now was only in himself. Perhaps, this could be the first time that he had been evaluated properly.

Jo Minjoon looked nervously at Alan. When he thought that he had made eye contact with him, Alan opened his mouth and said.

“We will start the evaluation. Starting from the front lines.”

Jo Minjoon was at the second line. The two that were in front of him walked towards the judges with their dishes on their hands. One of those two was Chloe. Jo Minjoon was closely looking at Chloe's dish. Cooking score of 8. It was the best Chloe could get.

Chloe's dish was fried wheat noodles that was accompanied with bok choy and bamboo shoots mixed. The light brown sauce seemed to be made with soy sauce and citron and was beneath the noodles, and she placed a half fried egg in the middle of it as decoration. Because of these many reasons, it could only seem delicious.

It seemed a rather easy dish to make, but it was quite difficult. Frying the egg and not cooking the yolk entirely was also skill, and only the fact that it was a fried wheat noodle dish made it difficult to make. She had to fry the noodle sufficiently for it to not get burnt, and at the same time, it had to be sticky. If she made a slight mistake, then that dish wouldn't even be considered as food, but as trash.

Alan lifted his fork and split the egg. The thin fried coat separated with the egg white, and on top of that, the watery yolk flowed like orange syrup. It even made the participants that were looking, gulp. Even Chloe was like that. It was a long time that she had felt something she had made to be this delicious.

Alan soaked the noodles and the bok choy in the yolk and put it in his mouth. The first thing that spread in his mouth was the citron and soy sauce flavor. The citron's strong flavor made so as the soy sauce's salty flavor was spread faster. When he chewed the bok choy, the citron's aroma was half gone. And what replaced it was the fresh flavor of the bok choy. The noodles that were between the leaves of the bok choy were transmitting the oily flavor along with the yolk.

Beautiful? No, it wasn't a flavor that could be described with that soft word. It was full of charisma. It was a primitive and provocative flavor that great generals before a war would eat. Alan desperately tried to stay calm. And it was the same for the two judges besides him. Alan opened his mouth first.

“Chloe. I ate well.”

Chloe didn't reply and just laughed awkwardly. It could be seen that she was nervous. Alan asked calmly.

“Is this your first time making this dish?”

“No. It's a dish that my mom used to make me all the time. Although the half done fried yolk was implemented by me. My mom just put in half done yolk.”

“.....Your mother is surely someone who has a deep understanding in cooking.”

“Of course. Until now, I have never eaten a dish more deliciously than my mother's.”

“So, do you think that you have made the recipe of your mother well?”

At those words, Chloe hesitated. She talked unconfidently.

“Mmm..... I already told you that this recipe is my mother's? And you said that my mother had a deep understanding in cooking after trying it. Then that means that you think that my dish was good.... No, at least, it is so for my recipe. And to view well a recipe, then you have to do the same for the dish.....”

“Stop.”

At the words that were getting longer, Alan opened her mouth. Chloe, that was talking by herself, stopped and looked at Alan. She just hit the floor with her forefoot. Alan continued speaking.

“I will go straight to the point. It was a good dish Chloe. And a delicious one, it's a good dish that made use of the advantage of the

fried wheat noodle. Specially, the combination of citron and soy sauce was really good.”

“I opinion is the same. I didn’t think that I would feel this good by a dish I have tried for the first time. I ate well. It was a good dish.”

Emily continued to say after Alan. Chloe smiled brightly at Joseph. Favorable criticism from two people, more than half of them had said that it was delicious, so she was already safe from getting disqualified. Joseph smiled benevolently and said.

“I ate well Chloe. You pass.”

“Thank you!”

Chloe yelled with a voice full of happiness and went upstairs. But the good atmosphere was broken almost instantly. The participant that was next to Chloe presented a baguette sandwich that contained cucumber, tomato, cheddar and fried potato.

It was eatable, but it wasn’t anything special. From the judges expression could be clearly seen what they were thinking. The judges ate a bite of the sandwich and chewed. In mean time, it was as if it was really hard to chew, but Alan spat what he had in his mouth to the bin.

And after that, there were many things he said. It is too ordinary. I’m getting suspicions on how you survived until now. Did you think that this dish would get a good score? They said many things but the conclusion was the same.

“Jamie. You are one of the disqualifying candidates. Go back to your place.”

And next, was Jo Minjoon’s turn. Alan raised his voice.

“Jo Minjoon. Helena. Bring your dishes.”

Jo Minjoon walked towards them with the tray in his hands. The first one to be evaluated was Jo Minjoon. The judges approached him. Alan looked down at the miyeokguk.

“Is this.... Miyeokguk?”

“Yes. I put perilla seeds in it and boiled it.”

“I did eat miyeokguk before, but it’s a first with perilla seeds in it. How do I have to eat it?”

“You can do it however you want.”

“This is.... All eaten in Korea right?”

“Yes. I improved a bit the temple cuisine.”

The judges first drank the miyeokguk. Next, it was the bibimbap, and after they ate the rolls they did it too with the gamjajeon. Emily let out a sigh.

“This.....is.....difficult.”

“I sympathise with you.”

Alan nodded and looked at Jo Minjoon. It was hard for Jo

Minjoon to understand what was difficult. Difficult to accept the flavor? Or to evaluate? It was at that time. Joseph hesitated to speak and finally said.

“Minjoon. We will be having a discussion. Step back please.”

Jo Minjoon didn't say a word and stepped back 5 steps. Emily whispered in a low voice.

“What are you going to do?”

“.....It was tasty.”

“It was also tasty for me. For normal people, rather than being exotic, it would not be tasty, but it was good for me.”

“It's a well done cooking. I couldn't come in contact with a temple cuisine, but the colours of korean cuisine were alive. But....”

Alan spoke. Emily understood why Alan was hesitating. Joseph said in a regretful voice.

“There's no main.”

“.....Yes. That's right.”

It was as they had said. What the judges were regretting wasn't about the score Jo Minjoon was worried about, nor the unfamiliar flavor. It was the lack of the main dish. Just that.

They could have said that the bibimbap was the main dish. But the strength of the flavor was really weak to be the main of this

meal.

Alan opened his mouth.

“If it was a family meal, then it would be a perfect one with nothing else to add. The side dishes are all delicious, and the harmony between them aren’t bad at all. However....”

Alan stopped talking and let out a sigh. Maybe, if he had presented the bibimbap alone, they could have given a higher score. Because the flavor wasn’t bad, and the composition was okay.

But although he presented many dishes, he forgot about the completeness of this meal. That was the problem. Between the similar level of the dishes, there was nothing that stimulated and made your mouth happy. The flavor was really simple, and it made you feel that they protected each other’s flavor.

Of course, that meant that he had a high comprehension in all of the dishes. But.....

‘It’s weak.’

Alan’s gaze grew sharp. And after that, the judges started to share their arguments.

And, the conclusion has been made.

“Minjoon. Come here.”

Joseph opened his mouth. Jo Minjoon put on an uneasy face while Joseph put on a smile.

“Personally, I think that this is the most delicious dish from all of the ones you had made. But the problem isn’t the flavor. It’s the heart. Until now, the catfish meatball stew, and bream, were all delicious, but your greed could be seen clearly from them. Of course, that’s an obvious thing. If you are a participant you hope to pass, and because of that, you can just cook.”

Joseph talked until there and stopped. He looked at the judges next to him.

“I think the same thing as Emily and Alan. The dish you have made this time was really warm. It wasn’t greedy, and it showed that you wanted to make a delicious and reassuring meal. Putting it in good words, it felt like a mother preparing it. But in bad words, it wasn’t a dish from a restaurant, but a meal from our house.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t say a thing. He was only listening attentively at Joseph. Joseph let out a sigh. He seemed to take this evaluation really hard.

“That’s why I can only say sorry. Because it was a really good dish. However, we aren’t customers, but judges.....And we can’t just look at your heart and judge. Minjoon.”



Joseph looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon slowly closed his eyes. He could already guess what he was going to tell him. And that guess didn't go off.

“I'm sorry. You are a disqualifying candidate.”

# Chapter 36: Absolute Sense Of Taste (1)

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Eliminating candidate.

He thought that one day, he would have to go through it, but he never thought that the day would come so fast. Jo Minjoon went back to his countertop with his tray on his hand. He could see Marco's worried expression. Marco said something through mouths shapes, but he couldn't know the meaning behind them. Jo Minjoon smiled without a word and looked at his cooking.

It is close to a family meal. Jo Minjoon, when he heard those words, realized something. That he ended up overlooking something.

There was no dish that was captivating enough in his cooking. He needed to make some special dish or had to make many garnishes to take advantage of that richness. But the dishes that were on the tray were only those four dishes. Gamjajeon, miyeokguk, bibimbap, and cabbage roll. There wasn't a characteristical korean richness, nor charm in these dishes.

When he heard that this was a well made family meal, he couldn't think of any words to refute. Certainly, you wouldn't know if it was a menu from a town restaurant that costed a thousand won(TL:korean currency. 1000won=1 dollar aprox.), but this wasn't something to be presented in a good restaurant. He also wanted to win through an exotic flavor, but the result wasn't that good.

But why could that be? He wasn't feeling that bad. Was it that he didn't feel anything about him being an eliminated candidate? No, that wasn't it. It was different. He did get angry. And it also bothered him. He felt sorry for cooking something that was only that much. But the words of Joseph, kept ringing in his mind. That it was the best cooking he had made so far.

It was his first dish. Not made as a participant, but as a chef. And Joseph didn't mind the level of the cooking. With that, he felt that one of his guesses were right. The cooking score was of course an important thing, but it didn't determine everything.

Just knowing that, he felt warmer. A bitter smile could be seen on Jo Minjoon's face. It was a smile that was hard to notice unless you looked in detail, but the cameraman that was next to him closed up on his smile.

It was a strange feeling. The regret and sorrow for becoming one of the eliminated candidate, and at the same time, happiness for his dishes being recognized. The scale was balancing more toward the happiness, but he could do nothing about the bitterness.

The evaluation continued. The people Jo Minjoon looked closely were three. Anderson, Kaya and Marco. And those three passed splendidly.

From the three dishes, one particularly touched his heart. Anderson's. Thinly sliced mozzarella cheese scabbed in eggplants. When the judges took a bite of it and the cheese inside the eggplant stretched, Jo Minjoon gulped having forgotten his own situation.

The evaluation all ended. From the 21 people, 13 people passed and all went upstairs. And the remaining disqualifying people were 8. Maybe he could say that he was fortunate, but there was no one close to Jo Minjoon among them.

Jo Minjoon looked at the second floor. And made eye contact with Kaya. It was a sharp and ferocious gaze as usual. Kaya opened her mouth. It seemed that she was going to say something, but ended up saying nothing. Jo Minjoon put on a light smile. Even if she did say something, they were on a distance where nothing could be heard. And knowing Kaya's character, she wouldn't even make a sound.

Marco, that was next to Kaya, gripped his fist as if he was making a 'fighting' posture. Jo Minjoon faced that fat fist, and made an okay sign. It was at that moment. From the side of the casting crew, a loud voice was heard.

"The eliminated candidates will be having an interview before the losers mission. Come to do the interview in the order you were evaluated."

Jo Minjoon was the second. After waiting for a while, Jo Minjoon went in the interviewing room. Martin was smiling as usual. At the same time Jo Minjoon seated in his place, Martin asked.

"How are you feeling right now?"

"Regretful."

Jo Minjoon said briefly. At that moment, Martin thought that it was because he was bothered by that question, but soon changed his mind after seeing Jo Minjoon's expression. To say that he was in a bad situation, he had an excessively calm face. How could he be like that? Martin thought of Jo Minjoon to be a greedy participant. Of course, there would be no greedy participants but, at least, he wasn't like a taoist that didn't dwell in front of victory.

But in Jo Minjoon's face couldn't even be seen a trace of despair that normal losers should have. So did he have to interpret that as something good? Maybe it could be seen that he didn't hold any grudges. But Jo Minjoon wasn't that kind of participant. The cameraman, normally follows him around only on broadcasting days, but the camera installed in the kitchens and other places were always running. And what the camera recorded was that Jo Minjoon was one of the participants that practiced the most in the kitchen.

Because of that, he couldn't say that Jo Minjoon didn't hold any grudge. Martin asked in a rather calm voice.

"Contrary to saying that it was regretful, you seem quite calm."

"Really?"

"Yes. Did you maybe get through it?"

"I wonder. It's difficult to say that..... But I'm not feeling that good. The words Joseph told me, that it was a good meal stays in my heart."

Jo Minjoon replied like that and smiled faintly. It was a smile that wasn't made up. An honest one. Martin thought that it would

be good material and asked.

“If you get to disqualify in this mission, then will you be able to smile like you are right now?”

Jo Minjoon didn't reply for a long while. When Martin started to feel frustrated, Jo Minjoon replied in a low voice.

“What did I tell you the first time we saw? That I wanted to confirm whether I should be cooking or not?”

“Yes. And that the winner was going to be Kaya, if there were no upsets. And if there was, that upset was going to be you. You also said that.”

At those words Martin said jokingly, the smile in Jo Minjoon disappeared instantly. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. A loud and hard voice was heard.

“The words I said at that time, I will have to cancel them.”

“Yes?”

“I understood this time. That I don't like losing nor getting eliminated. The participants, they cook and I also do. Their dishes are delicious and so are mine. I won't keep saying that it is something unavoidable. I will reach the highest I can. I won't stop for myself.”

His determination was transmitted in those words. It seemed like he was chewing each of the words and spitting them out. Maybe, if this was a movie, Martin's role would just be to admire him at

those words. But this was an audition program. It was an interview. Martin couldn't help but throw another question at him.

“But what are you going to do if a huge wall stands in front of you? What if you end up falling?”

Jo Minjoon replied without hesitating.

“I'm going to cry. I'm going to shout and yell. But..... in the end....”

Jo Minjoon rested for a moment. And Martin gulped. The cameraman that was next to them, and the broadcast writer were looking at Jo Minjoon's mouth nervously.

“I will have to stand up. Because that's what I have to do.”

—

Everyone's interview ended, and the 8 participants stood in front of their countertops. The judges looked at the disqualifying candidates warmly. Alan stood in front. He had his fingers intertwined and said severely.

“You people are about to get eliminated right now. There will be three people eliminated among you, and perhaps, even more so.”

A heavy atmosphere presented for a moment. Nobody could open their mouths. Even the participants that passed and were on the second floor, and the disqualifying candidates.

They couldn't help but get closer in the time they were together. They knew that they were competitors, but they got along all the days. On top of that, they had the same hobby of cooking, so it was hard not to get closer between them.

To open your mouth in front of those participants and the heavy atmosphere, it would be a difficult thing to do so even if you were a judge. Alan opened his mouth, when he did so, his eyes were sunk really deep.

“I will announce the elimination mission.”

It wasn't a loud voice. But it couldn't be helped but to be heard more clearly than ever. Jo Minjoon just looked at Alan. Alan brought a big wooden box to the table where the judges were. When he opened the box, a groaning sound could be heard from the participants. Because they could deduce what the theme would be just by looking at that.

Alan said.

“It will be a tasting mission. The [fried tofu pockets](#) that are in front of you each contain different things. The ingredients that are contained in a pocket are twenty. You will have to say what those twenty ingredients are and guess the contents. The three that guessed the least amount of ingredients will be the ones to get



eliminated, and if there is someone who didn't even get one right, will also get eliminated if there are already three eliminated people.”

Jo Minjoon just looked at the wooden box. There were 10 pockets inside of it. And they were all numbered.

At the same time, Jo Minjoon could confirm. That he would be winning this mission. He couldn't help but think like that. Because he had the strength of the system. He was confident on being able to guess the ingredients better than anyone in the world. If they didn't have an absolute taste like Kaya, it was impossible to name all of the ingredients as precisely as Jo Minjoon.

The cooking score of the fried tofu pockets varied. They were mostly 5 points, but there were also 4 points. It seemed like they focused on the ingredients inside of it rather than the flavor. Alan elevated his tone of voice.

“Pick your fried tofu pockets. The turns will be decided with the order of the numbers.”

At those words, the participants approached the pockets and picked a number. The first thing that disappeared was the number 1 pocket. It was understandable. Because in these kind of missions, it would be more comfortable to go first. Because in the end, they just had to wait for three more people that got a lower score than them. It was better to know their own score early on. But of course, if a situation occurred where they got 2 ingredients right, it would be a completely meaningless election.

Because Jo Minjoon didn't hurry, the remaining numbers were only 8, 9 and 10. Jo Minjoon picked the number 10 calmly. Alan glanced at Jo Minjoon and then, opened his mouth.

"It would be better to go first. Why didn't you hurry?"

"Because it's meaningless."

He didn't know how he would interpret that, but Alan stared at Jo Minjoon for a while. But fortunately, he didn't extend the conversation. As Jo Minjoon got back to his place, Alan looked at the participant with the number 1 pocket and said.

"Selena, come out and try your fried tofu."

Selena. The one who claimed to be a housewife was wearing her apron and walked forward with a faint smile. After she ate it, she started to name the ingredients in a rather bright voice. But when she got the first one wrong, the second, and also the third one, her voice became clearly more unconfident.

In the end, the ingredients she guessed right were five. 5 out of 20. And the next participant didn't do much better. Six. The one who did the worst was the sixth participant. A white man that was over his sixties, Dan, could only get three ingredients right. It was understandable. Because the older you got, your sense of taste got duller. Even if he tried to do his utmost to sense the ingredients, there was a limit to it.

The seventh participant was a food stylist, Danny. He got eleven ingredients right away and got the admiration from the people upstairs. But after that, he got it all wrong. But of course, it was a really good score getting 11 right.

And then, Jo Minjoon's turn came.

“Come to the front Minjoon.”

Jo Minjoon walked with a calm face. And didn't hesitate for even a minute and put the fried tofu pocket in his mouth. It happened so fast, that Alan got perplexed. Jo Minjoon chewed a few times and gulped it down. And then closed his eyes. A window appeared in that darkness.

[Fried tofu pocket]

Freshness: 84%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 4/10

The flavor was only eatable. But the most important right now wasn't that. Jo Minjoon removed the setting of the hidden ingredients. And at that moment, all of the ingredients that contained showed up. Jo Minjoon said in a calm voice.

“Beet.”

“Yes.”

“Coriander.”

“Yes.”

“Bamboo shots”

“Yes.”

Jo Minjoon kept naming all of the ingredients without stopping. Duck eggs, pistachio, chaga mushrooms, squash. And he also guessed the unexpected ingredients like front pork leg, octopus body, herring body fat. And the only thing Alan could reply was ‘there is’. When Jo Minjoon got 17 ingredients right, the people in the second floor were filled with amazement. It was a shocking thing.

And Alan was no exception. He was forcing to look calm, but his eyes were twitching a little. Even he was only confident in guessing 12 right, if he was asked to do so. But right now, in front of him was a young asian man getting all of the ingredients right.

‘What is this cursing sense of taste.....’

No, it wasn’t just the problem of tasting. He had to eat and feel what the ingredients were in order to differentiate them with all of the food in the word. If he didn’t incorporate it in his tongue, it was an impossible thing to do. He wondered if it was a humane ability to be able to guess the parts of the pork or octopus that only a bean size of it was used. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth once again. It seemed like it was bothersome to name each of the ingredients, so he named the remaining three ingredients at once.

“Ground cherry pepper, [dang noodles](#) (당면), tofu.”

Jo Minjoon said that and slowly opened his eyes. He said in a rather cool voice.

“That’s the end.”

And then Alan replied.

“..... I will get crazy.”

## Chapter 37: Absolute Sense Of Taste (2)

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Nobody said a word. They just couldn't. Even accepting what just happened was hard to do so. No, precisely speaking, it was excluding two people. One of them was Kaya. She was standing with her arms crossed and observing down at Jo Minjoon. And the other one was an unexpected person, Martin.

He could only do so. No one was expecting that kind of ability from Jo Minjoon, and it was the same for Martin. No, was that something that could be explained through tasting? He had just seen what had happened with his own eyes, but even still, it was unbelievable.

‘This.....is great. Great.’

This scene was the greatest in this season. No, it was also the greatest from all of the previous ones. Because there was no such thing that made you happy and flustered than his ability. Even right now, his heart was thumping so madly that it could almost be heard. It was to the point that he couldn't wait to see the reactions of the participants. Maybe, some would say that it was made up. The argument would bore an issue, and the issue would come back like a huge snowball in the form of elevated ratings. In Martin's face could be seen a smile so big that almost seemed to rip.

He had never thought that Jo Minjoon would be a treasure trove. His handsome face and right attitude was just to attract fans, but in the end, this was a cooking program. When his dishes were compared to the other chefs, it couldn't be seen as anything special. Coupling with Kaya, and looks that caught the viewers

hearts. That was what Martin had thought of him until now.

“I was leaving a jewel in the ground.....”

Martin sighed while mumbling. He couldn't hold the regret to have known of his ability just now. It was at that moment. The youngest PD that was next to him whispered in his ear.

“Sunbae. Weren't the contents leaked?”

“Don't speak nonsense. The ones who filled the contents of the pocket were the judges themselves. If Minjoon wanted to know the answer, then he would have to buy the judges. Do you think that the judges would sell themselves to this youth?”

“.....But even so. He got all of that? Is that possible?”

“Reality is always more fictitious than fiction itself. Keep looking. Because this is an important scene that doesn't show up much.”

“Minjoon. Did you have an absolute taste.....?”

“.....It's similar.”

Jo Minjoon replied like that. Because it wasn't like he did have it. But because of that, he couldn't reveal the system.

Saying the truth, if he had wanted to avoid this kind of situation, he could. Because he could get some ingredients wrong on purpose. But he didn't want to. He did think of the system as foul play. But he would stop doing so. The danger of getting disqualified stimulated him. Because this was a place where if you lacked

something for even a moment, you would fall. It was that kind of war.

And Jo Minjoon even had to show an ability he didn't really have. He wasn't in a situation where he could relax.

The reason why he got all twenty ingredients right, was partly because he wanted to promise himself. He wanted to show all of his abilities. He wanted to show everything he had to the judges, and to the people.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Can I go now?”

Jo Minjoon pointed to the place where the eliminated candidates were. Precisely speaking to the place where the confirmed surviving candidates were gathered. Alan flinched and looked back at Joseph. It was the same for Joseph to be surprised at Jo Minjoon's sense of taste. Joseph said.

“.....I will now announce the disqualified people. Selena, Dan, Jordan. It's unfortunate, but your relation with Grand Chef will be up to here.”

Selena started to cry. The judges and the people who passed looked at her with a sad expression. Three people got out from the broadcasting place and soon, it was filled with silence. At that moment, Jo Minjoon couldn't know if they were silent because of



him, or because of the three people that left.

Jo Minjoon looked up. All of their gazes were directed to Jo Minjoon. Rather than saying that it was burdensome, it was strange. Did he ever get this much attention? Oh, right. There was one time. When he claimed that the winner was going to be Kaya.

But the sights from then and now were completely different. Envy? Jealousy? Those were sights that couldn't be expressed with any words. Those were sights he had never experienced before.

Jo Minjoon lowered his head. After all of those gazes, the one who opened his mouth was Joseph. Joseph said hurriedly.

“You possess an ability we couldn't even think of. I'm impressed.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon replied with a cool expression. However, Joseph couldn't be as cool as him. Because the more sensitive a chef was to flavor, the better dish he would be able to make. Having a deep understanding to flavor means that he would be able to make that much of a delicious dish.

Joseph opened his mouth for a while. But the words that were supposed to come out remained in his mouth. Those were some heavy words to casually say them. He couldn't be caught in the moment and just say some random things.

In the end, Joseph could only calm down his excitement. Joseph started to calm down and opened his mouth.

“I ask to the participants upstairs to come down.”

The participants that were on the second floor conversed between themselves and came down to the second floor. The moment Jo Minjoon turned his head, he could see that Kaya was looking at him. It was at that moment when Kaya was opening her mouth. In front of him, Chloe’s face appeared out of nowhere.

“Congratulations. I didn’t know I would be able to see someone that guesses the ingredients in such a cool way.”

Before, he thought that she was staring dumbfoundedly, but it seems that she has memorized everything in her head. Chloe smiled and said.

“Do you have an absolute sense of taste? I’m quite curious.”

“Ahem.”

Alan’s coughing could be heard. Only then did Chloe realize that the judging hadn’t ended. Chloe’s face reddened and shut her mouth. Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at Kaya. Suddenly, her sight was directed at the judges.

“Congratulations. You 18 people are the ones who get to participate in the next mission.”

At that moment, everyone cheered rejoicingly. Just then, three people that used to be with them disqualified, but a happy thing

was a happy thing. Of course, those who were close to those three just clapped. Emily smiled and said.

“Until the next mission, you are free. I hope that you get a comfortable time.”

“But you mustn’t relax. Don’t forget that you are gathered in a place where many amateur chefs came to realize their dreams. This is a place that demands your pride, and responsibility.”

Alan said with his usual cold voice. But he, who was looking at all the participants, fell his gaze on Jo Minjoon, and laughed.

“But it seems that you will have to talk about many things today. Now, go. Go and rip your prey to your hearts contents.”

Alan talked like that and turned back.

It was at that moment, almost all of the participants turned their heads to look at Jo Minjoon.

—

After Alan’s not so considerate consideration, Jo Minjoon went to the interviewing room. He had already come before the disqualifying mission, but the atmosphere was different. Jo Minjoon looked at Martin’s sparkling eyes and could know, for the first time in his life, what a real sparkling eye was. And he thought that it was quite a burdensome and harsh expression. Jo Minjoon said with his voice trembling.

“Martin, until when are you planning to look at me like that?”

“Don’t you know that feeling? When you pick a rock without thinking of anything and that rock turns out to be a valuable jewel worth tens of thousands of dollars. That’s what I’m feeling right now.”

“.....Is that supposed to make me happy? In the end, it means that you used to look at me like an ordinary rock.”

“But it also means that now I look at you like a jewel.”

Martin talked like that and smiled letting all of his teeth be shown. Jo Minjoon could confirm. That from all of those times he saw Martin, he was the happiest right now. But he could understand him. Because for a PD, there was nothing more precious than an excellent scene. And the scene from Jo Minjoon in the eliminating mission was such a scene.

“So, the interview?”

“First, let’s go with the basic things. How are you feeling right now?”

“Saying the truth, I don’t feel bad. Because I survived. It’s not a situation where I should be sad.”

“What did you think when you got to know that it was going to be a tasting mission?”

“I survived.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t hesitate and replied. Martin nodded as if he understood him.

“It means that you were confident in tasting.”

“It’s similar.”

Jo Minjoon replied bluntly. He felt like he was being praised for cheating on an exam and getting a full score. But he started to get more shameless. Because even if he answered through his tasting or through the system, the result was that it was still his ability.

“Why didn’t you tell us until now? If we knew that you had an absolute taste.....”

“Because it’s another thing than cooking. There was no need to say it. Of course, there was also no need to hide it, so I showed it like this.”

“Does the score you told us about last time related to your tasting?”

At that question Jo Minjoon flinched. He didn’t know what he should reply. But because it was the same function of the system, it was better to just say that it was because of his tasting. Jo Minjoon nodded and said.

“Yes.”

“Then the top score would obviously be 10, right?”

“That’s right. However, I never ate a 10 points dish. Because it’s not just the flavor, it’s also the skill and experience of the chef that I evaluate.”

If it was the same as before, he would just say that he was bluffing, but looking at his absolute taste, such thoughts didn’t

even show up. Martin put on a smile and looked at Jo Minjoon. At that smile that seemed to appreciate him with whatever he did, Jo Minjoon backed off a little.

“Saying that you haven’t experienced a 10 points dish means that you did for a 9 points?”

“Yes. Only once. At East rabbit garden. The sheep ribs over there were an absolute art.”

“Just once..... I think I get what you are talking about. Then what about the 8 points?”

“Only being an 8 points dish can make your whole day happier. I have eaten such a dish in this competition. Hmm.....”

Jo Minjoon started to think. Saying the truth, he had seen many 8 points dishes. Kaya’s grilled eel was 8 points, and her salmon tataki salad was also 8 points, but because it didn’t match the theme, it couldn’t be eaten by the judges. Chloe’s pan fried scallops were also 8 points.... For it to be an amateur competition, there were a lot of 8 points dishes. It was also that this season’s level was high.

But the 8 points dishes he could name right now, were the ones he had tried. Because he couldn’t judge a dish he didn’t even eat. And there was only one dish. Chloe’s pan fried scallops. The foie gras he had made by Kaya was also 8 points, but because he was being evaluated by the judges, he didn’t have the time to try it. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“In my opinion, the pan fried scallops Chloe made when we teamed up was an 8 points. Beyond that, I wouldn’t know because I

haven't tried any."

"So what's the highest you can make with your own hands?"

".....Unfortunately, I still can't cook an 8 points dish. Making a 7 points one is my utmost."

Maybe, it could be a rather funny scene. Because even when Michelin restaurants were evaluated, there were many restrictions and strictness on the evaluation. And that person was evaluating a dish just by himself.

'But it's different when he has an absolute taste.'

Martin thought like that and still didn't erase that big smile that seemed to rip. Compared to what Jo Minjoon had given him, this treatment was nothing.

The interview lasted for a long while more. It was a longer interview than usual. And because of that, Jo Minjoon didn't feel like doing anything. Being interviewed was more taxing than cooking.

I will slowly get back and rest. That's what he thought, thinking about it, even when he got back he would be interviewed by the participants. It was when he was leaving the interviewing room without strength. After he opened the door, Jo Minjoon stopped his steps. A long and curly blond hair was fluttering in front of him. When he was looking at the nape of that woman, she turned back. Jo Minjoon opened with his voice trembling.

“.....Emily?”



## Chapter 38: Absolute Sense Of Taste (3)

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“I have been waiting for you.”

Emily said that and smiled brightly. Jo Minjoon looked at her with a puzzled expression. It was the first time he had a conversation in private with Emily, no, with a judge. It couldn't be helped. Because they were busy people. They only appeared when they had to broadcast, and aside for that, they were each doing what they had to do. They were in a really different situation than the participants.

“Why were you.....?”

“Well, I don't like to hit around the bush. So I will go straight to the main point. I can, right?”

“Yes.”

Jo Minjoon replied briefly. The smile that was on Emily's face became lighter. She put on a more serious look and opened her mouth.

“Have you ever thought of becoming an epicurean?”

“.....What?”

At the sudden question, Jo Minjoon's brows twitched. Emily raised both of her palms as if she understood him and continued saying.

“I know. That it's too sudden and that it will puzzle you. But I

couldn't be still after what you have showed me.”

“The tasting mission?”

At Jo Minjoon's question, Emily nodded. She said.

“Your tasting. If you become an epicurean then you will become one of the best in the world. Cooking? Of course, tasting is important. However, tasting is just one factor required to cook. But when you evaluate a dish, it's the most valuable ability.”

He could vaguely understand what Emily was trying to say. However, Jo Minjoon's was rigid. He replied in a low voice.

“I'm a chef. I like to cook.”

“I understand. I won't urge you to immediately become an epicurean. However, you can come to me whenever you want to become one. Because I will raise you.....”

Emily gave him her business card. Jo Minjoon stared at the business card for a while, and finally let out a sigh and accepted it. Emily smiled faintly as if she was feeling sorry.

“To propose something like this to someone that dreams to become a chef, maybe I only got your head messier. I'm really sorry about that.”

“.....There will be no way I give up.”

“I also hope so. Because people who enjoy good flavor, can give it. Probably, if you keep walking straight, you will become an excellent chef. That will be a good thing by itself.”

Emily stopped talking and looked at her watch in her left wrist. And she put a surprised expression and clasped her hands.

“Wow! It’s almost time for the plane. I will have to go. Don’t be bothered too much about it. Because I have only teased you once.”

“I’m not.”

“Then, it’s a relief. Whew, I will really miss the plane like this. I’ll see you at the next mission. Ah! And you were really cool today.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t reply and let out a troubled laugh. Emily waved her hands and left. Listening to the steps that her high heels made, another accustomed voice sounded from behind.

“Emily loves epicureans.”

Jo Minjoon got surprised and looked back. And then, let out a sigh. For one problem to appear after another. It was a judge after another. Alan was seated in a sofa that was close to the hallway’s wall. Alan turned over the page of the magazine he had in his hands and opened his mouth.

“And you will become quite a good epicurean.”

“.....Is it a special day? I think it’s the first time meeting the judges aside from the missions.”

“Well, don’t you know the reason yourself? Minjoon.”

Alan closed the magazine. Even so, he wanted to tell him something, but it all seemed too made up. Jo Minjoon looked at Alan. Alan's dark brown eyes were as difficult to see through as ever.

“What do you think about Emily's proposal?”

“If you are talking about me becoming an epicurean, then I think that I won't even have to think twice about it”

Jo Minjoon didn't even hesitate and replied. And he thought that Alan was going to like that answer. However, there couldn't be seen any changes in Alan's expression. Alan said in a low voice.

“It's a good proposal.”

“Yes?”

Because it was way too unexpected, Jo Minjoon's voice flowed trembling. Alan said calmly.

“Being a chef is a hard and arduous job. You have to work when others eat, and even if you don't smoke, there are many cases where you end up with lung cancer because of the repeated use of oil. You have to be in front of fire in summer, and in winter, you have to put your hands in ice water.”

“... ..”

Jo Minjoon didn't say a word and just listened to him. He believed that Alan wasn't really telling him to become an epicurean. He wanted to believe so. Alan continued talking.

“An epicurean is different than being a food critic. It’s not suited to you. You have talent in cooking. But it’s not as much as tasting food. I think that you will be more successful as an epicurean than a chef. However.”

Alan got up from the sofa. He threw the magazine he had in his hands to the bookshelf and opened his mouth.

“I hope that you won’t give up the road to becoming a chef. Even if you are threatened by lung cancer, accidents, heat or cold, I hope you become a chef. The reason why I’m standing here right now is because of that. Because it was obvious that you would get seduced by that woman, Emily.”

“.....You are worrying for nothing. That proposal wasn’t charming at all. I am going to become a chef.”

“No. It is charming. Even if you don’t feel it like that right now, the day that you feel it as such will come. It’s something that you can’t help it if you are human. The people who saw the dishes will imagine through them the good life of the chefs, but what really is in the kitchen is reality and pain. Cooking in your house and in a restaurant is different.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t reply back. He couldn’t say that in the past, no, in the future he had worked as the youngest chef in a restaurant. But it was also a funny thing if he said that he understood all of the hardship with just that experience. Alan said in a low voice. The voice seemed to be coming from a teacher teaching his young student. That voice was the same he had when he used to teach, so Jo Minjoon could feel Alan’s goodwill. That’s why he didn’t say a thing.

“It’s not that I’m disregarding your passion for cooking. I’m just saying these things to let you know that it’s really difficult”

“.....I have something to ask.”

“Yes. Tell me.”

“Why are you treating me this well?”

For Jo Minjoon, he could only be curious. Just now, he had said with his own mouth that he was more talented in tasting than cooking. Then why?

Alan replied.

“You can’t make something you don’t know. It’s the same for flavor. If you do know the flavor, then you can also bring it out. And I’m curious as to what kind of dish you will make when you grow. Perhaps....”

Alan seemed to want to say something, but in the end he closed his mouth. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and said.

“I understand why you are acting like this. I thank you for your interest, and worry. But I want to say that you are worrying in vain. My skills are still lacking and I don’t have much experience. However.....”

Jo Minjoon paused for a moment. And then, looked at Alan’s dark eyes. A world class master chef. Even with that overwhelming difference, he didn’t back down.

“I also know the happiness of cooking. The satisfaction when I cook a delicious dish, and looking at the people eating it getting happier. Cooking is the most precious gift life has given me, so how can I let it go?”

—

‘.....Absolute sense of taste.’

He was going back to his room and started to think. If you know the flavor then a good dish comes out? Honestly, those words didn’t make him much happier. It wasn’t that he knew the flavor, but had the system’s strength. The absolute taste Alan was thinking about would be more suitable for Kaya than for him.

Thinking about that, he started to think that he wanted to get that absolute taste. Would the system provide him that? He couldn’t know. In the first place, he didn’t even know if the levels went up when his skills improved, or if his skills improved when he leveled up.

However, his thoughts didn’t last long. When he was getting up to the fourth floor where his room was, the participants that were gathered on the lobby looked at him. Even at first glance, there were at least 10 pair of eyes looking at him. Jo Minjoon said nervously.

“.....I’m a little busy.”

“How weird. The schedule for the participants is all the same, but for some participants to be busier than others.”

Kaya, that was seated in the sofa's arm, laughed while mumbling. Her smoky makeup seemed more grumpy today. Chloe tapped an empty space of the sofa and said.

“Aren't you tired? Come here.”

“I'm not particularly tired.”

Jo Minjoon grumbled and sat on the sofa. A ginger haired young white man opened his mouth. Was it Jacob? His voice was clear and had a big body. He wasn't really close to Jo Minjoon.

“What was that from before? Do you really have an absolute sense of taste?”

“Well, it couldn't be described with other words.”

“To deny it in this situation was a funny thing to do. Jo Minjoon turned his head. Chloe was looking at him with eyes so sparkling that it bothered him. She opened her mouth.

“I'm really curious about how an absolute taste feels. How is it? Do you feel happier when you eat something delicious?”

“I wonder. I don't even know other people's sense of taste, so wouldn't it be weird for me to say something?”

“You are right..... Then what about pickiness?”

“I'm not really more picky. You should know as we have eaten



together before.”

“I thought that I knew, but I didn’t know that you had such a sensitive tongue. Isn’t it really not tasty but you are just not showing it?”

“How could I? It was a good dish.”

As Jo Minjoon replied like that, Chloe let out air as a whew as if she was relieved. It was at that moment that he thought that her face seemed like a squirrel, or like a turtle, but she was really cute. A husky voice was heard as if it was making fun of him.

“You would be happy. Having an absolute taste and all.”

Jo Minjoon let out a laugh as if he found it ridiculous. If other people asked him that, he would understand them. But the one that said that was none other than Kaya Lotus. She didn’t have a fake tongue like him, but a real cursed tongue. Jo Minjoon thought that she did have an absolute taste.

The reason he thought that was because of her tasting level. Kaya’s tasting level was 10. Of course, he didn’t know if that meant that she had an absolute taste or not. In the first place, the videos Jo Minjoon saw about Kaya didn’t mention her having an absolute taste. But he thought that it would be weird if she was level 10 in tasting and didn’t have an absolute sense of taste.

‘Well, the important thing right now is not that.’

Somehow, he had to get out of that swamp surrounded by gazes.

However, it didn't seem that easy.

“How did you guess the part from that small piece?”

“Can you differentiate between beetroot and radish?”

“Can you differentiate the ratio of a dough through flavor?”

There were many questions being poured at him, so he couldn't answer any of them. It was at that moment when the questions seemed to be ending. Kaya sat on the arm chair of the sofa that Jo Minjoon was seating, and brought her finger to his mouth. Actually, it was a dumpling she had given to him.

Jo Minjoon closed his lips and looked at Kaya with big, round eyes. Kaya put on a malicious smile and whispered.

“I made them. Eat. Why don't you guess what's in it?”

“No, I..... cough.”

When he was about to say something, Kaya put another dumpling in Jo Minjoon's mouth and pushed. Jo Minjoon could only chew them. And after chewing for a bit, he covered his nose. A strong smell flowed through his nose and seemed to pierce his brain. Kaya smiled.

“Do you know what it is?”

Jo Minjoon still covered his nose and didn't reply. He couldn't reply. Jo Minjoon looked resentfully at Kaya. And in front of his

eyes, a window appeared as always.

[Wasabi dumplings]

Freshness: 88%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality: High (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 4/10

## Chapter 39: The Role Of A Head Chef (1)

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There was a little change after word that Jo Minjoon had an absolute taste spread. And that was that the other participants brought the dishes they made to Jo Minjoon.

At first, it was quite good because he could eat various dishes, but as time passed by, it became more tiresome. The participants didn't simply want him to taste it. He didn't know where they had heard from, but they also knew that Jo Minjoon could score a dish. And the result was what was happening right now.

“What is the score.....?”

Chloe looked carefully at Jo Minjoon. The noodle was blended along a peanut, pork, green onions, etc. sauce. [Dandan noodles](#)(탄탄면). It was a simple dish from China, just like it was for [bibim guksu](#)(비빔국수) in Korea. And because it was simple, and even the cooking method was simple, the score could only be low. 6 points. Jo Minjoon wondered how he had to reply to her and brought the noodles to his mouth.

The peanut oil that was fried along with chili, was covering the noodles like a sauce, and as soon as he ate a bite, his tongue got slightly numb. But the numbness felt good. After the spicy flavor, came the delicious flavor, and the thick noodles that were between [udon](#)(우동) and chinese noodles, lessened the oily flavor.

The salty flavor of the pork was also good. But the end result was 6 points. Jo Minjoon put the friendliest voice he could and opened

his mouth.

“It’s delicious. I’m not even chinese so it’s rather awkward to say this, but I think that you expressed all of the flavor the dandan noodles could have.”

“Really?”

“But the score is only 6.”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, Chloe became instantly depressed. It seemed like she was trying not to get that depressed, but it was also a score that was hard to get happy with. Jo Minjoon tapped her shoulder and said.

“I told you. That high scored dishes aren’t the only good ones. The score only shows the technique that was used in the dish. Although it could be an important standard on missions, usually, there’s no need to be bothered too badly about it.”

“Hmm..... Then that means that if this dish is presented in a mission, it would be difficult to pass, right?”

“.....Probably, you won’t receive favorable comments.”

Excluding the things he had observed until now, there were cases where 6 points dishes would be approved and passed by the judges. Probably, it would be a dish that contained something other than cooking technique, but not only because it was a 6 points dish meant that you were going to get eliminated. However this dandan noodles was different. The score was a score, but it didn’t seem to have the strength to pass on a mission.

He couldn't console her through lies. Jo Minjoon remembered that Chloe didn't survive for long, and he thought that it was because she focused more on flavor than in the cooking process. Perhaps, it would be something possible because of her pure love for cooking, but even so, she had to be more greedy to survive in these missions. Didn't he almost get disqualified for his sloppily made korean meal? Jo Minjoon said in a serious tone.

“Chloe. I understand the philosophy you have for cooking. You care more about the flavor than the technique, right? I also understand that. However, that shouldn't be the case for the missions. You saw the results I got in the previous vegetarian mission. Of course, aside from the technique, it wasn't such a good dish.....”

“To make bibimbap that wasn't even fried rice along with seaweed soup on the mission, it was indeed terrible.”

Kaya, that was across them, said while laughing. Jo Minjoon glared at her, but she pouted at him as implying what did he want. Marco opened his mouth.

“Even so..... I think that it was a nice try.”

“What? That meal?”

“No. Challenging the mission with a relatively familiar meal. Of course, the results weren't good..... But chefs often want to make that warm meal.”

“If you want to make something warm you can just fry it on the frying pan.”

Kaya replied like that and grumbled. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“Whatever, what I want to say is this. That it’s good to make a good dish for a mission, but basically, you have to show your skills and experience with your dish. Because in the end, the judges evaluate that. I don’t want to look at you disqualifying because you weren’t greedy enough.

He thought that those weren’t some special words, but at that moment, silence flowed in the table. Jo Minjoon looked dumbfoundedly at everyone. Chloe was putting on a deeply moved face, and Kaya was putting on a disgusted face. Although Marco had a normal expression, in the first place, his fat covered his face, so it was difficult to discern his expressions. Jo Minjoon said with his voice trembling.

“Why with that expression?”

“.....Putting aside that you are saying that to a competitor. Aren’t those some romantic words? This isn’t even a love program, but a cooking program.”

Kaya frowned as if something wasn’t to her liking. Jo Minjoon replied hurriedly.

“Don’t turn it to a weird direction. It’s nothing like that.”

“Enough. I’m leaving first. I’m getting the creeps. Who’s in charge of washing the dishes today?”

“You are. Don’t escape and just sit down.”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, Kaya clicked her tongue and sat again on

the chair. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Last time, when I was conversing with mister A.....”

“Who’s mister A?”

“You know. Anderson. I was in the middle of conversing with Anderson.....”

“You conversed with him? Weren’t you in bad terms?”

“No, but even if we were, we aren’t permitted from conversing. If I have to explain it, I was hungry that night, and wasn’t sleepy, so that night I went to the kitchen.”

“Went?”

“... ..”

Jo Minjoon stopped talking. His knitted brows were expressing his emotions clearly. Kaya leaned her body towards the chair after laughing as if she understood. After feeling that he had overcome something difficult, Jo Minjoon continued talking.

“Anyways, I had the chance to converse with Anderson. And at that time, there was something we talked about. That good food is different to well made food. And that what we have to show to the judges is a well made dish.”

“But even so, you made that korean meal?”

At Kaya’s words, he didn’t have particularly anything to refute her. When Jo Minjoon closed his mouth, Chloe tapped Jo Minjoon’s back and said in a severe tone.



“Kaya. Stop bullying him.”

“.....But I didn’t.”

Kaya pouted out her lips and mumbled. Marco that was eating the crepe he made, only opened his mouth then.

“Minjoon. It’s my turn.”

Marco served the crepe in Jo Minjoon’s plate. And said with expectant eyes.

“Tell me the score of my dish!”

—

The days on Grand Chef’s house passed by quite quickly. When you spend everyday with people that enjoy cooking, those days were felt as camping.

And soon, the third episode had also ended. They were all related to the qualifying phase. From the next broadcast, the main phase should start broadcast. The participants waited everyday for the episode to be broadcasted. Those were leisure and comfortable times.

But Jo Minjoon couldn’t spend his time leisurely. And the reason he was making the call right now was because of that.

“Yes. I think I will go after a while. Travelling fees? I have plenty. Yes. Don’t worry. Yes. I will call you next time.”

The day where the mission was going to be announced, at the kitchen. When the judges were waiting in the broadcasting place, a call from Lee Hyeseon came suddenly. It seems that she was worried for her son that was far away from her. The call ended, and Jo Minjoon let out a long sigh. It was about time he told her about Grand Chef, but his mouth didn’t easily open. Marco that was next to him, looked with amazed eyes.

“You talk korean really well.”

“.....In the first place, I am korean.”

“Oh, right. I tend to forget because your english is really natural.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon replied while laughing. Chloe, that was next to him, asked as if she was worried.

“You still didn’t tell your parents?”

“It’s about time I should. But I think that they will be troubled if I did that. I think that they will be less troubled if I tell them after getting a good result.....It’s complicated.”

“Fine. What about this? You are going to tell them if you pass this mission.”

“What if I don’t’?”

“Then, I will tell them! That Jo Minjoon loves cooking the most in this world, and he is the sexiest when he does so. That this road

is Jo Minjoon's road. That if you allow him to, he will surely become a good chef. How about it?"

".....I only heard the part of me being sexy."

"Ugh, enough."

Chloe replied like that, and turned her head. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was laughing at her. The door opened and the judges came in. The participants and Jo Minjoon started to applaud. It wasn't because they wanted to, but because it was an indication from the director.

After the judges passed by them, they looked at them with an expression you couldn't know as usual. And among the judges, Joseph was holding a big box. Even at first glance, it seemed like a box used to draw lots. Was it related to the announcement of the mission? Everyone were tilting their heads when Emily opened her mouth.

"It's been a while. Before announcing the mission, I want to congratulate you all. You have done well. You are the most outstanding 18 people from those thousand participants from all around the world."

At the end of those words, cheers were heard. Of course, half of those were because of the indications they had received, but Jo Minjoon, while cheering, could feel his chest getting hotter. The most outstanding 18. It would be a lie if those words didn't make him happy.

Alan took a step and opened his mouth.

“Saying that you are able to make these kinds of dishes means that you are that much of an outstanding chef. However, a chef isn’t completed just because he handles the knife and the pan well. The life of a chef is teamwork. There is a limit to what a chef can make. I believe that you felt that in the last team mission.”

At that moment, every participant knew by intuition. No, it couldn’t be called as intuition. Right now, Alan was blatantly giving away the answer. That the mission that was soon going to start would be a ‘team mission’. And their guesses weren’t wrong.

“This mission will be a team mission. You have to separate in two teams consisting of nine people. And just like a normal restaurant, you will need a head chef.”

At that moment, everyone gulped. You could guess just by looking at their faces. ‘Please, don’t let it be me’. The head chef seat had more disadvantages than advantages. Because you had to be responsible of everything. It could only be a bothersome seat for amateurs like them.

Joseph smiled brightly and walked forward with the box in his hands.

“There are a total of eighteen balls in this box. There is red and blue balls, and the rest are all white. The people that picks a coloured ball will be the head chef.”

‘ I just have to pick a white ball.’

Jo Minjoon thought like that and nodded. Alan elevated his tone.

“Come and pick your ball. You will feel more comfortable the earlier you pick your ball.”

Maybe he was stimulated by those words, but a red haired youth ran towards the box. It was Jacob. He put his hands in the box with a nervous face. And pulled it out. Alan laughed.

“A head chef appears from the start.”

“Ah.....”

Jacob looked dumbfoundedly at his hand. And on his hand was a red ball the size of his head. The other participants couldn't help it but feel more relieved. Because, the probability of them becoming the head chef lessened by half. Jo Minjoon asked Kaya, that was next to him.

“What about you?”

“What?”

“Head chef. Do you want to become one?”

“.....You know my temperament.”

“That you are fierce?”

Jo Minjoon asked jokingly. Kaya frowned and shut her mouth. Looking that she wasn't replying meant that she also knew what her character was. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“And you?”

“I wonder. Half and half? Honestly, when would you become head chef if not in this situation?”

“That’s.....right. But I still don’t want to do it. I will certainly be bad mouthed.”

He felt sorry looking at her being uneasy about being bad mouthed. It seems that the shock she got recently from the broadcast was big.

The line kept shortening. Were there at least 5 people that still didn’t pick? But even so, the blue ball didn’t appear. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon anxiously.

“You go first.”

“But I can go and pick a white ball.”

“But.....ah, I don’t know. I will go.”

In the end, Kaya went up first. And after a while, there was a blue ball in Kaya’s hands. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon resentfully.

“I told you to go first.”

## Chapter 40: The Role Of A Head Chef (2)

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He evaded Kaya's gaze and Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts. Did Kaya originally become the team leader? At least, it didn't happen in Jo Minjoon's memories.

'Did it change as I came?'

It was understandable. Because the butterfly effect wasn't a word that existed in vain. Saying that history changed because there was one more ball added, wasn't a weird thing to say.

Alan opened his mouth.

"The two team leaders has been selected. Come to the front."

Jacob simpson, and Kaya Lotus. Alan looked at them slowly. And then opened his mouth.

"Are you confident?"

"No."

Kaya didn't hesitate for even a moment and replied. Her eyes that seemed fierce because of her make up, seemed all the more fiercer. If a person that didn't know her saw her, they could think that she was angry, but Jo Minjoon or Chloe knew what kind of person she was as they were always together. That it was a nervous face. Kaya's character was like a porcupine. That the more afraid she was, she acted all the more stronger, she had a bad tendency to

act like a villain.

‘It would be good if she did something about that character of hers.’

Jo Minjoon felt sorry for Kaya. But of course, it wasn't in a situation where they could relax. Although she was living a peaceful life in Grand Chef's house, her real home was in the ghetto. Reality was still the same. But of course, many things would change after this program ends.

“Before making the teams, first, there would be a survey. Each of the participants would have to stand in front of the team leader you want to team up with.”

At those words, everybody glanced at Kaya and Jacob, and started to move their feet slowly. And the results were as expected. There were six people with Jacob, and ten with Kaya. And from those ten there were Jo Minjoon, Chloe, Marco and Anderson. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson with unexpected eyes. He whispered.

“I didn't know you would come here.”

Through the first and second episodes, the image they made Anderson and Kaya have, was that of rivals. At first, they weren't conscious of each other, but could it be called hostility? It was a weird image. That's why it could only be unexpected for Anderson to join Kaya's team. Anderson replied.



“The odds are higher here.”

Because it was too honest, Jo Minjoon couldn't find the words to reply back. It was just as he had said. Kaya was a better chef than him, and the skills of the participants were quite good. Because right now, there were Marco and Chloe with their respective level 7 skills. And Jo Minjoon that was known to have an absolute taste.

In the other hand, Jacob Simpson wasn't a participant that particularly got any attention. His character was cool, but the competition wasn't so light as to follow him with just that.

Jo Minjoon looked at Jacob's level.

[Jacob Simpson]

Cooking level: 6

Baking level: 5

Tasting level: 6

Decoration level: 5

It was ordinary overall, and didn't have any special points.

‘But it doesn't only require skill to be a head chef.’

Anyways, even Kaya was unable to perfectly take the role as head chef. Maybe, he thought that a person like Jacob, that had a friendly character was more suited to it.

But of course, saying that someone had more advantage wouldn't influence his decision. And the reason he chose Kaya wasn't simply because she stood out more. He was Kaya's fan, and right now, he was her friend. He didn't know how Kaya thought of him, but at least, he thought like that.

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. What kind of thoughts would this porcupine like girl be having? At that moment, Kaya rolled her eyes and looked at him. She was asking with her eyes. 'What are you looking at?' Jo Minjoon too replied with his eyes. 'Just so.' Kaya's gaze became sharper. However, they couldn't properly start the stare fight. Alan was raising his voice.

"The team leaders have to appeal themselves for each of the participants. Who wants to start?"

Jacob raised his hand instantly. Alan nodded and made a hand gesture. Jacob coughed and took a step. And he said with a voice filled with momentum.

"I'm Jacob Simpson. Probably, there would still be people that don't know about me. Because I still couldn't show you something special."

No different reaction could be seen. However, Jacob didn't sulk and continued speaking.

"Since small, I have grown and looked at my father's back that was working in the kitchen. Although he didn't command someone cooking, he knew well how a head chef had to act. Please,

believe in me. And i'll certainly repay you."

And that was the end. Alan nodded and looked at Kaya.

"Kaya. Come up."

Kaya let out a sigh and walked towards the judges. And she slowly looked at the participants. After hesitating for a while, she finally opened her mouth. It was along with her usual provocative gaze.

"I won't be appealing myself. Do as you wish. Come, or don't."

".....Is that the end?"

"Yes. What else should I say?"

Kaya talked like that and turned her back to Alan's perplexed face.

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. She cared about the camera and negative comments about her, so why are the words that come out from her all like that? Is it some kind of defense? He couldn't know.

Jo Minjoon grabbed the mic in his fist and whispered in her ear.

"Why are you acting so spoiled?"

"Shut up. Don't act like you are my oppa."

Kaya said sneering. Jo Minjoon asked again thinking like ‘don’t tell me that’..

“Are you acting like this because you think that you became the team leader because of me?”

At that question Kaya glared at Jo Minjoon for a while, and kept her mouth shut. Chloe hit Jo Minjoon with her arm, and when he turned back, he intersected his arms and shook his head. It meant that she shouldn’t bother her.

When Jo Minjoon clicked his tongue and got away from Kaya, Chloe whispered in a low voice.

“Don’t irritate Kaya when she’s sensitive.”

“I’m not trying to.....”

“Minjoon, Chloe! Concentrate!”

As they were about to start conversing, Alan shouted loudly. Chloe’s cheeks blushed and she closed her mouth. Alan looked severely at them, and then continued speaking.

“You can each select one person at a time. But, in the case where the opposing person denies, the opportunity passes to the other team leader.”

It was a simple rule. Kaya and Jacob stood in front of the judges.

Alan opened his mouth.

“Decide the order. However, the person that picks second can ignore the right to deny you. Who wants to go first?”

“I want to.”

Kaya raised her hands without hesitating. Alan looked at Jacob. He nodded his head as if he agreed to it. Saying the truth, even if he got to pick after Kaya, the right for him to pick a candidate forcefully felt better. Because, even if got to pick first, if he got refused it would be meaningless.

The moment Jo Minjoon heard the rules, his thoughts got complicated. What would happen if Jacob picked him. No, there wouldn't be a 'what would happen'. Because Jacob could ignore his right to refuse him. Because absolute tasting was a skill that aside from cooking, was a really useful weapon.

However his worry was all in vain. The next moment, Kaya's voice was heard and it ended with his worries.

“Minjoon. Come here.”

It wasn't even a proposal. At her expression that was confirming that he would come, he let out a forceful laugh. Of course, when he was told to pick a team, he chose Kaya. But looking at her, that just recently was acting like that, to call him as if it was an obvious thing, he felt it quite funny but at the same time he felt good. Jo Minjoon didn't hesitate and nodded.

And at that moment, there was a person that had a bigger smile than Jo Minjoon. It was Martin. Martin was smiling brightly while looking at Kaya and Jo Minjoon that were inside the screen. However he put it, the relationship between the two was good material to pick for the viewers. He had already mentioned their relation through the previous announcement chapter, and from those who had viewed the first chapter, there were many that cheered for Jo Minjoon's and Kaya's relationship.

At first, he just thought of making them look like a couple, but there were just too many precious scenes between them to throw away. It was also when Kaya was doing her disqualifying mission. And the appearance of Kaya, when Jo Minjoon grabbed her mic and whispered to her, made his heart beat and seemed cute and sexy even for him.

But not only because of that would Martin be this happy. The absolute taste that was revealed at the last mission, and the geniusness of Kaya that was usually emphasized. When they were together the reactions would soar to a new height. Martin wanted to immediately fall asleep and wake until that scene was broadcasted.

Of course, there was also a person that didn't like Martin's actions. It was the PD that was next to him. He let out a sigh and said.

“Aren't you liking this too much? In the first place, this is a cooking program, so if you focus too much on romance....I wonder if the identity of the program is going to get destroyed.”

“If you add a kiss scene in an action movie, does it become a melo movie? This is the same. Just because you put in a romantic scene doesn’t make you unable to concentrate in cooking. The case where the identity is destroyed is only when a different story is transmitted.”

Some people might say not to add scenes that are not cooking in a cooking program. But those were only words of a certain someone. The viewers can’t get satisfied with just cooking alone. The drawing system that was implemented was also proof of that it needed a fun factor.

You wouldn’t know if it was a documentary. And to sloppily make an entertainment program more heavy was a stupid thing. And clearly, Martin wasn’t a stupid person.

“Those two are going to be in charge for this season’s ratings. The screen is made by the casting director, but the scenes are given by the participants. With that meaning, those two are specialists. It’s to the point that they make me wonder if they aimed for it.”

Maybe he was having fun, but Martin’s words got longer. The youngest PD shook his head and turned his head. Jacob was thinking about who to take as his teammate. Alan pressured him with a calm voice.

“Jacob. Choose now. Who are you going to nominate?”

“.....Wait a moment.”

Jacob was deep in his thoughts with his brows frowning.

Actually, the one he wanted to take was Jo Minjoon. An absolute taste was an outstanding ability for all kinds of team missions. Because he could precisely judge and evaluate their dishes.

However, he was taken by Kaya. For Jacob, it was as if plans got ruined from the start. He looked at each of the participants that wanted to go to Kaya's team. Because it was an obvious thing to take a participant in her team forcefully. And at the same time, their skills had to be good.

The candidates were simple. Chloe, and Anderson. They were the participants that were claimed to be winning candidates. And aside from them, the ones he wanted to pick would be Jo Minjoon and Kaya. Precisely speaking, he was paying attention to Jo Minjoon from the start. Of course, when he claimed that Kaya was going to win, he also attracted attention. But that was different to right now.

Absolute taste. An ability that everyone dreamed of having, but in the end, they couldn't possibly have. However, Jo Minjoon was a person that did have it. He wasn't normal. He would be different. He couldn't help but think like that. And didn't people that were really prideful go to Jo Minjoon begging him to try their dishes?

But it didn't have any meaning right now. Because the ones Jacob could pick were Anderson and Chloe. Anderson's western cuisine and Chloe's chinese cuisine. The more he thought about it, Jacob got more inclined to one option. In this mission, the team's harmony was more important. So he couldn't help but prefer western cuisine.



“I will go with Anderson.”

Anderson flinched for a minute, but he didn't show bad manners like frowning. Jo Minjoon laughed and said.

“Bye bye, mister A.”

## Chapter 41: The Role Of A Head Chef (3)

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Anderson could only wonder. Was he going to refuse or not? But looking at Jacob's eyes, it was obvious that even if he did refuse, he was going to be taken by force. And if that did happen, he would only hurt his teammate from the start and waste a forceful move.

In the end, it seemed that he didn't have the right to refuse. Anderson moved. Jacob laughed and shook Anderson's hands.

"Thank you for coming."

".....Who are you going to pick next?"

"Let's think about that after looking at who Kaya chooses."

They both directed their eyes to Kaya.

Kaya was looking with a complicated face to the people that were in front of her. If she had to choose someone she was close with, then those will only be Chloe and Marco. Kaya hesitated for a minute and opened her mouth.

"Chloe. Come here please."

"Whew. Thanks."

Chloe let out a relieved sigh and walked towards her. But the one left was Marco. He sent a nervous expression. However Jo Minjoon didn't worry. Because Marco's skills weren't properly revealed until now. Because the other participants only knew that Marco had a little skill in baking. So he thought that there would be no

way Jacob was going to pick Marco.

“Marco. I will be grateful if you come.”

So at Jacob’s words, Jo Minjoon couldn’t help but get surprised. He had never imagined that Jacob would actually choose Marco. And that was the same for Marco. He couldn’t do anything and just stared at him.

However, Marco’s decision was already decided. He forced a smile and walked towards Jacob. Although Jacob could take him by force, it wasn’t a good thing to decline. In the first place, even if he didn’t have the right to take him forcefully, Marco was a person that didn’t know how to decline to a person that said that wanted him.

‘If things are like this, then the forceful move has no meaning.’

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. Well, didn’t the judges also know of that and gave him that right on purpose? Because all of the skilled chefs couldn’t be gathered in Kaya’s team.

When the sixteen people found their own teams, there was no one that declined the proposal. Kaya picked from the participants that chose her, and Jacob had the forceful move so they didn’t think of declining.

It was a bit unfortunate for those that didn’t wish to be on Jacob’s team, but in the end, it was a good result. At least, they didn’t get hurt, and could balance the overall skills.

Emily opened her mouth.

“Good. The teams are decided. Then, I will now announce the theme of the mission. This mission.....”

Emily paused. But nobody was curious about what she would say next. Because it was really obvious. When they split in two, they could only think of one reason for that. Emily laughed as if it wasn't fun and said.

“Well. Everybody should have expected it. It's a full course. Saying it in french, it would be a haute cuisine. But of course, there's no need to make it only with french dishes. You have to make a full course that's similar to [haute cuisine](#).”

Nobody got surprised. They just let out a sigh or looked at Emily with an excited face as if they had known all along. Jo Minjoon was one of the excited people. Full course. Haute cuisine. All of that was a chef's romance.

Emily continued speaking.

“Of course, I won't ask of you to design your menu and prepare right now. The time limit is tomorrow. Consult with your teammates and design your menu. And there's one thing you should keep in account. We aren't going to be the judges tomorrow, but you have to set your dishes for a total of forty people, all from different social standings. The losing team will do the eliminating mission, and three of those will leave Grand Chef's

house.”

It had always been like this, but the word ‘eliminate’ made them feel chills down their spine. Emily laughed while looking at the nervous eyes of the participants. Alan that was next to her opened his mouth.

“This will probably be the hardest mission you have ever had. I will give you one tip. Think a lot, and share you thoughts. If you just draw a painting you thought by your own..... You will only end up staining the drawing paper.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon unconsciously looked at Kaya. Would this stubborn girl be able to draw a proper picture?

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After the announcement of the mission and the composition of the team ended, the teammates along with Jo Minjoon, gathered in the lobby of the 4th floor. Of course, it was to debate about the course meal menu. Hugo, from Mississippi, opened his mouth. Dark curly hair with dark eyes. The characteristic of a spanish white man, showed on his face. Jo Minjoon just listened at his words.

“How are we going to divide the parts?”

“.....First, tell me the what you wish to make.”

Kaya said bluntly. But everyone just exchanged glances and

couldn't open their mouth. There were many things they had to make. Salad, soup, risotto pasta, etc. It was a bit embarrassing to take on something easy, and it would also be burdensome to take on the main dish.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“I want to be in charge of the appetizer. Dessert..... too wouldn't be bad. Only, I can't make ice cream or pudding. Because baking is not my specialty.”

He did think of making the main dish, but it was hard for him to use the recipe composition ability properly when a steak like dish became the main dish. But of course, he could get in charge of making the steak, and pass his recipe to another person. But these people gathered all had good cooking skills. You wouldn't know if it was evaluating their dish, but they wouldn't allow another person to pass on their recipe.

So because of that, he wanted to make the appetizer, which the recipe was the most important. Kaya nodded with an unconcerned face.

“Fine. What about the others? Looking that you aren't speaking, I can just take it as you are okay with everything, right?”

“I want to make the main dish. A fish one.”

Chloe hesitated but ended up raising her hand. Even if she was bright, she was also really careful. The words to be in charge of a main dish didn't easily come out. Because it was the same as

becoming the protagonist. But of course, as it was a team mission, there was nothing better than attracting more attention, but even so it felt different. Kaya nodded and said.

“The person who spraks first gets it. Does someone else want to make a fish main?”

Kaya looked at all of her teammates, but no one opened their mouths. Thinking about how difficult it was to handle fish, it was understandable. From trimming it, to cooking. A dish with no low difficulty was the fish.

“It seems like there are none. So Chloe will be in charge of the main fish dish, okay?”

“But how many main dishes should we make? Two? Three?”

“Hmm.....”

At that unexpected question, Kaya got panicked and couldn't reply. Saying the truth, it could only be like that for her. Because she had never eaten a proper course meal. There were times where she did make sloppy course meals in her house, but that was only an imitation. She didn't know how a course meal should be composed, and what rules it needed to have.

Kaya rolled her hair with her finger and rolled her eyes. She was the kind of person that didn't hide if she knew or didn't. Jo Minjoon said next to her.

“In my opinion, I think that doing three would be good. Kaya has

to do the generalization, and we have to make eight other dishes. Honestly, making salad or fruit doesn't require too much effort. So wouldn't it be better to focus on the main dish?"

".....He says so."

Kayad forced herself to put on a calm face and looked at her teammates. Fortunately, there was no one that wanted to bully this young team leader. Because they also saw the broadcast, they vaguely knew what kind of past Kaya had. There was no need to point out that she didn't know about course cooking.

Joanne opened her mouth. She had curly blond hair that reached up to her shoulders, and she seemed just like some one that came out from a 1920 american magazine. She was a white girl that enjoyed old fashion.

"But what is the team leader going to do? If you become the head chef, should you make a dish?"

"... .."

Kaya couldn't immediately reply and glanced at Jo Minjoon. She found it hard to answer it by herself. Because she still didn't know the role of a head chef. Her eyes were yelling him to help her. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

"Honestly, it's difficult for the head chef to also cook. Only with checking how we are doing makes her busy. But of course, it would be good if Kaya's cooking was included, but it's tiresome."

"Is that so....."



Joanne nodded as if she had been persuaded. Kaya was just glaring at the table. No, perhaps, she was only looking at it, but her eyes and her make up made it seemlike that. Kaya opened her mouth with her sight fixed at the table.

“I want to go to the bathroom. Minjoon, let’s go together.”

“Right..... What?”

Jo Minjoon just replied casually, and looked at her as if he had heard something wrong. And that was the same for the participants. Jo Minjoon forced a laugh and said.

“Go? To bathroom? With me?”

How perplexed must he had been to say words separately. Kaya nodded with a calm face.

“Yes. Bathroom. It’s the order of the head chef. Follow me.”

After she finished saying this, she immediately walked towards the bathroom. Jo Minjoon looked at his teammates dumbfoundedly, and stood up while reddening his face. Chloe pulled from Jo Minjoon’s sleeve. And whispered to him in a low voice.

“If Kaya does something, yell. Understand?”

“.....And are you going to rescue me?”

“Nope. Just going to watch.”

Chloe talked like that and laughed teasingly, like a child. Looking at her laughing face, Jo Minjoon couldn't even get angry. It was when Jo Minjoon wanted to take a step.

“I will go for a while.”

He didn't even have the courage to look at the expressions his teammates were making.

But when he went to the public bathroom, Kaya wasn't present. It was at that moment. A sound that was hitting the wall. Kaya was standing in a hallway that was separated from the toilet by a short distance. She pointed at her back. It was her lodging.

Even before Jo Minjoon could say something, Kaya got inside her room. Jo Minjoon hesitated for a moment and followed her. Although it was her lodging, he was unfamiliar with going in a girl's room.

“Is this the bathroom?”

“If you have the urge, just go. There's also one inside my room.”

“.....I'm not talking about that. Why did you say that so suddenly? Telling a guy to go together to the bathroom. The atmosphere got weird.”

“I'm sorry.”

Looking that Kaya was apologizing puzzled him. She was not the type to usually lower herself. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and said in a softer voice. He could guess why Kaya had called him like this.

“I think that I vaguely know why you called me. But why me? There’s also Chloe.”

“.....Just so, it’s more comfortable for me asking you for help. But don’t misunderstand. It doesn’t mean that you are easy.”

Kaya said with a serious voice and lifted her right hand as if she was making an oath.

“I will give you a lot of lesson fees.”

“With what?”

“.....I will make breakfast every day for you. At least, until I get disqualified.”

At that simple and charming proposal, Jo Minjoon laughed. And then he opened his mouth.

“And if you win, are you going to make it for me forever?”

## Chapter 42: The Role Of A Head Chef (4)

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Only after he had finished speaking did he realize that it was something a 30 year old man would say. But Kaya wasn't particularly bothered by it. She was a girl that grew in the market. She was already accustomed to those kinds of jokes. Looking at Jo Minjoon's face being unable to beat the embarrassment and getting more awkward, Kaya glared at him.

"Although there aren't cameras in the halls, there are in the rooms. Don't forget that."

"Ahem. Anyways, what did you want to ask me?"

"Although I want to ask you something, I don't even know the basics. Just think like you are teaching a newbie."

Jo Minjoon let out a groan. Although he did say that he was going to teach her, he wasn't well versed in that luxurious meal, in that full course. The things he knew right now were few things he had acquired through the internet or through real experience.

He started to slowly explain in a rather low voice. Kaya put a dumbfounded face at times, and at others, frowned. Excluding common words like 'yes ; I understand' the only time she opened her mouth was when she was being explained about the 'gueridon service'.

"So, I could see it as cart service, right?"

"Yes. You can think of it as bringing an almost completed dish and finishing it in front of the customer."

"But wouldn't man power lack, then?"

“We need someone to do the serving anyways. We will have to make the main dish completely from the start, but for desserts or soup, you can prepare it beforehand.”

“.....Hm.”

The conversation continued that way. Of course, they couldn't make it long. Because they couldn't say that they were going to the toilet and be there forever. But just because of that, it wasn't that they ended it in a short time. When ten or so minutes passed, Kaya and Jo Minjoon went back to their teammates.

“Did you go well to the toilet?”

“Fortunately, i'm safe.”

At Chloe's question, Jo Minjoon replied while laughing without strength. Some of their teammates looked at the two and laughed. They could guess that Kaya used the toilet as an excuse and went to receive a lesson. However, there was no need to point that out and bother her. Because only looking at the two of them acting like this was fun enough.

Joanne rolled her blond hair in her finger and opened her mouth.

“While you were in the toilet we organized our thoughts a bit. The main dishes are going to be sea bass, turkey and ossobuco.”

“Aside from [ossobuco](#), they are all familiar ingredients.”

“We can't cook with unfamiliar ones. And it's not that an epicurean is coming, but customers from various social standings, so I don't think that it would be good to present unfamiliar dishes.

But well, the final decision is the head chef's."

"I don't have any objections. Because all of you decided this, right?"

Kaya talked like that and rolled her eyes to the top right. It seemed like she thought of something, and she opened her mouth after pausing for a bit.

"Deridong.... No, gueridon service. I think that it would be good doing that. If there are forty people, then it would be at least ten tables..... Ah, but are all forty people customers of the blue and red team?"

Kaya frowned. Chloe clapped her hands as if she remembered something.

"Now that I think about it, I already asked that to the PD. Listening to him, it seems that they are going to eat both of the course cookings."

".....It seems that they will be eating a considerably huge amount of food."

"Ah, that's not it. They are going to split in half and in the afternoon, they are going to eat one team's lunch and when it becomes night, they are going to eat the other team's dishes."

"You should have explained it earlier."

Kaya grumbled. But Jo Minjoon could understand. Because in the end, it was a broadcast. They couldn't explain all the small details in camera.

It was at that moment. Hugo lent a piece of paper to Kaya. She flinched a moment and received that piece of paper with a nervous face. Hugo said.

“It’s a recipe we made by ourselves. Take a look.”

Jo Minjoon also reached his neck next to Kaya to check the recipe. It wasn’t that outstanding because it was designed in a short time, but it did have a structure. The moment he read the lined recipe, in front of him appeared the average cooking score along with the composition score just like before. And Jo Minjoon’s face became rather dark. The cooking score was 6. And the composition score was 5.

“It’s not good.”

The one who spoke wasn’t Jo Minjoon, but Kaya. She continued talking while frowning.

“Putting aside the positioning of the dishes, the recipe of all of the dishes are not good enough. Honestly speaking, just by looking at the recipe makes me lose my appetite. Do you want your dishes to be returned by the customers?”

If it was like usual, Jo Minjoon could have stopped Kaya, but Jo Minjoon agreed at her words. Although it was composed hurriedly, it was a low quality recipe. Kaya opened her mouth.

“First, it gets strange since the main dish. Roasted turkey with handmade mustard? Do you think that the customers would want to come here to eat a luxurious three minute dish? God. Oh my god. Who thought of this?”

At Kaya’s question, a short sized guy raised his hand slowly. Peter Gray. He was indian american. Kaya was looking at him sharply.

“What do you want us to do? Do you think that you would be able to achieve something with this simple dish? If you are going to come out like this then back off from the main dish. Just.....”

Kaya’s voice started to get higher. Chloe that was next to her, was filled with worry and was about to stop her. Peter’s low voice interrupted her.

“Aren’t these things better compared to what you used to eat?”

“.....What did you say?”

“They say that you come from the ghetto. No, that you are from the ghetto. You didn’t even properly go to middle school and dropped out. Don’t you think that it’s funny acting like an excellent epicurean or a chef when you have lived that kind of life?”

The atmosphere got cold in an instant. Kaya looked at Peter expressionlessly. No, it seemed expressionless but the muscles in her face twitched so hard it seemed to explode any moment. Kaya’s unique husky voice flowed out from her mouth.



“So, you are telling me not to touch your poor like recipe?”

“Poor like recipe? I wonder. I don’t know well what it means to be poor. But it seems that you do? Well, you are poor, so...”

“This son of a bitch.....!”

Kaya stood up while cursing. Chloe that was next to her that didn’t know what to do, got surprised and grabbed Kaya’s waist. It was a good decision. Because if she was late by even a second, she would run and fix her fist in Peter’s face. Looking at Kaya that was being held by Chloe, Peter kept speaking.

“Even if you are poor it seems that you don’t want to hear such words. I’m sorry. I will apologize.”

“Hey, you are overdoing it.”

“Do it appropriately.”

The teammates that couldn’t keep watching, tried to stop Peter. Kaya’s face seemed to be possessed by the devil and was pouring all kinds of curses you couldn’t even understand. Peter was looking at that Kaya and was putting a relaxed face. It was at that moment.

“Fucking shit.”

A low voice flowed naturally from all that commotion. At first, everybody followed that voice without thinking much, but soon, they doubted what they had heard and turned their heads. It was Jo Minjoon. He, who was usually calm and composed, cursed with his own mouth.

Even Kaya, that was cursing at Peter, stopped and looked at Jo Minjoon. It was that much. Jo Minjoon didn't panic at receiving that sudden attention. But rather, looked at the two of them with his eyes twitching.

“What are you trying to do? No, what did you come here for? You came to cook. But why are you saying nonsense with that mouth you use to taste food?”

“It's not that i'm saying nonse, he's saying that i'm poor and.....”

“It's true that Peter talked dirtily. But how clean did you talk? Why do you always talk in an attacking way? You clearly know that you are going to clash. Even after that scandal you made when you teamed up with Anderson, you still haven't got ahold of yourself?”

Kaya didn't know what to say and looked at Jo Minjoon with her eyes shaking. For her, Jo Minjoon's words were more shocking than Peter's. Since when did it become like that? That she thought that Jo Minjoon would obviously stand up for her.

Peter, that was slightly looking at the situation, opened his mouth.

“Yeah. My words were harsh, but honestly if she didn't pick a fight with me.....”

“You too, don't point things out like that. You aren't a victim. What the hell is with you attacking her self just because you took a blow? How old are you? Twenty three? Four? You are older than me. But what the hell are you doing to someone that isn't even in her twenties? Poor? Is that even something to say?”

His words weren't particularly mixed with curses, but his voice seemed to contain all kinds of curses and bad words. Peter seemed like he wanted to refute something, but there was particularly nothing he could say. Because Jo Minjoon's words were right. He also saw the sights of the other teammates.

And Kaya too, couldn't find any words to say. It wasn't that she only did immature and stubborn things. She understood why Jo Minjoon got angry, and she, that had too many things to owe to him wasn't in a situation where she could refute something.

But she couldn't do nothing about her sorrowful feelings. Perhaps, if Chloe wasn't hugging Kaya's shoulders tightly, she would probably have cried. Although, because Kaya was a hand bigger than Chloe, it seemed that it wasn't Kaya but Chloe that was being held.....

Jo Minjoon let out a deep sigh. And said in a lower tone of voice.

“Let's get your act together guys. You are old enough. You are not children. Do I, no, do we have to act to the point that we have to change your diapers?”

Those were some harsh words to listen to, but at least for Kaya and Peter, they couldn't say that it was harsh. Because they didn't have the right to. Jo Minjoon continued speaking.

“And even in my opinion, the recipe is lacking. Didn't you make the recipe sloppily because you don't have to focus on a single individual? I don't think that the combination of mustard and

roasted turkey is bad. But it's a bit weak to present in a luxurious meal. Maybe Kaya's words were excessive, but she did point out the bad things."

No reply came back. Under the awkward atmosphere, Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. Honestly, he didn't want to act like this. But he thought that if he let those two alone, the team would crumble. And the only one who could intervene was Jo Minjoon. Because if it was anyone else than him, Kaya wouldn't accept it obediently. Still, it was through the shining Jo Minjoon that he could control Kaya.

"Let's not make emotional problems between ourselves. We came here to cook. And tomorrow, we are going to welcome the customers. It's my first time as a chef that i'm treating a customer. I'm expecting it, i'm flustered by it. And I think that my heart is the same as yours. Isn't that right? So at least, we should prevent from presenting a dish that's filled with annoyance."

Jo Minjoon talked up to that point and took a breath. Kaya and Peter seemed to calm down a little, and were sitting on their places while pouting.

Jo Minjoon glanced at the camera that was installed in a corner. He thought that Martin would really like this scene.

'Whatever happens, that old man is the one who profits the most.'

Thinking about Martin laughing and grinning made him all the

more detestable. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and leaned on the sofa. Chloe glanced at her teammates and whispered to Jo Minjoon in a low voice.

“What are you going to do? I think i’m going to die from awkwardness.”

“I, don’t, know.”

Jo Minjoon spoke word by word in Chloe’s ear. Chloe trembled as if it tickled her and stood up from that place. And yelled in a loud voice.

“First, let’s eat dinner!”

“.....But it’s only 3:30?”

“It’s okay. We can make something that takes long to make, and can eat dinner a bit earlier.”

Chloe laughed and looked at them.

“Did someone die from an illness for eating dinner?”

## Chapter 43: The Role Of A Head Chef (5)

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Her intentions to try to liven up the mood were too obvious. They didn't know if that liveliness was fake, or if it came from an honest heart. Jo Minjoon couldn't know.

But one thing he knew was that his heart calmed down a little. Because if you say bitter words, people who listen to that would feel bad, but it's the same for the person that says it. So because he was Jo Minjoon, he couldn't feel good after saying those bad words.

Chloe also tried to liven up that, and if not for her, only an awkward atmosphere would have remained. Whatever it was, Jo Minjoon felt grateful for Chloe. Because the burden he was feeling got relieved thanks to Chloe.

“At least, I don't have that kind of illness.”

Jo Minjoon grinned and got up. “Me too.” Hugo got up. And after that, all of the team members got up almost at the same time. It was the same for Peter and Kaya. They couldn't back off in this kind of situation. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya and said.

“I think that it would be good to make the dishes we were planning to make tomorrow, what do you think? Chef.”

Kaya, that was listening to Jo Minjoon with a bad face, at the word of chef, she couldn't help but stiffen her face and looked at him. Hugo that was next to them received those words with an

excessively funny face.

“Now that I look at it, even if it’s provisional, a head chef is still a head chef. I will also call you chef from now on, chef.”

“Me too, chef.”

“Chef? That’s good. It makes me feel like i’m in a real kitchen. It’s okay, right chef?”

Joanne and Chloe laughed and looked at Kaya. Kaya was forcefully putting on a calm face, but her ears were reddening. Kaya opened her mouth.

“Just..... Fix the recipe.”

“Yes, chef!”

Hugo replied like how a soldier would salute. And after that, Kaya shut her mouth.

The cooking proceeded in a more comfortable atmosphere. The team members each started to make what they were planning to do so, and Jo Minjoon also did the same. What he started to make was [bisque de crabe](#).

The bisque in Korea was a soup made by grating clam, crab or shrimp’s shell and was recognized greatly. However, only half of it was correct. Precisely speaking, bisque is a dish made by making a soup with crustacea and molluscs shell. But there was no need to grate it.

The first thing Jo Minjoon handled was the vegetables. Celery, carrots, onions, garlic, parsley, thyme, salt, olive oil and bay leaves. Jo Minjoon sliced those vegetables and put them in boiling water. He was planning to make a vegetable broth.

Actually, when you made bisque by the normal way, what was recommended was to use chicken broth or fish broth. However, if he wanted to do so right now he had to use a product, and Jo Minjoon thought that it was better to use vegetable broth rather than doing that. In the first place, aside from it being a product, vegetable broth brought out the flavor more cleanly.

He put the broth on fire and Jo Minjoon started to handle the crab. The kind of the crab was dungeness crab, and it was normally eaten in the western coasts of America. And the size of it was as big as the ones that lived in the United States. Even roughly felt, it was almost 1kg.

But it was more comfortable the bigger it was, anyways. Jo Minjoon immediately dislocated the joints of the crab, and carefully peeled off the shell. It was a job that was easily done for people that touched crab everyday. To hull the uncooked meat. However, Jo Minjoon wasn't accustomed to doing it, so he could only be cautious. Because if he put in even a little bit more of strength, the meat would crumble.

‘Perhaps the reason the cooking score is 7 is also because this job is difficult to do.’

Jo Minjoon thought like that and smirked. The crab bisque he was making right now was made by placing the meat of the crab in



a plate and pouring hot bisque in it.

“Minjoon, is it going well?”

“It’s half done.”

“Wow, already?”

Chloe asked in a surprised expression. Jo Minjoon slightly looked back at her. Chloe said she was going to make grilled sea bass, but she was still handling the fish. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Want me to help you?”

“No, i’m almost done.”

“If you need, just ask. Because i’m going to finish in a little while.”

“Yeah.”

Soon, the vegetable gravy was also done. It was time to slowly make the bisque.

Jo Minjoon lowered the fire to middle and he put in butter and canola oil in the pan. And when the butter was moderately melted, he put in the chopped shallots. Shallots, that was a variety of onions, had a thinner texture and the flavor was also lighter. When you needed the flavor of onion but it was somewhat excessive at the same time, it was a good choice to put in onions.

After he slightly sauteed the shallots, he put in the gravy and cream and seasoned it with salt and white pepper. And then, it was

the time for the crab. Precisely speaking, it was putting in the shell and the guts of the crab. Then, he boiled it for five minutes and after he poured dry white wine, he boiled it again.

After that, he had to use the sieve for the bisque. Because there couldn't be rests of gut and shell on the soup. And the sieve was obviously better if it was thick.

He poured the soup on the plate that contained the crab meat, and then, placing some thinly chopped fresh tarragon on top of it was the end. Tarragon was a herb that was sweet and the spicy flavor was so exquisite to the point that it was called as the queen of spices by the french. He believed that the tarragon was going to save the simple flavor of the crab bisque.

Jo Minjoon slowly drank a spoon of the bisque soup. At first, he didn't feel much inspiration. The sweet and salty flavor stimulated his tongue first, and when the soup was flowing through his throat, he felt the unique and clean flavor and aroma fill his mouth.

When he got a hold of himself, he was smiling really happily. A flavor you couldn't smile with. This time, Jo Minjoon ate the crab meat. The soft and tender meat crumbled easily just like soft tofu. It was to the point that he could chew it with his tongue and the ceiling of his mouth. And he couldn't feel a fishy smell at all.

“Is it tasty?”

Hugo, that was cooking the ossobuco slightly glanced towards

him. Jo Minjoon just replied back with a smile. And that became enough of a reply. Hugo was stirring the pure and opened his mouth with earnest eyes.

“Give me one bite.”

“I don’t want to. After you eat a bite, you won’t get that much inspiration later when we eat. Because there’s not a stronger moment than the first bite.”

“No, I will evaluate it with what I eat right now, so give me a bite.”

“I can’t. The smell of the pure is still going to be left in your nose and mouth, so I feel really sorry for my bisque for you to eat it.”

“Ah, you are dirtily tenacious.”

Hugo grumbled and looked away. Jo Minjoon smirked and look at the surroundings. Everybody was busy, but all of them were almost finishing. Hugo, Chloe and Peter that were in charge of the main were preparing the sauce without touching the meat. No, precisely speaking, it wasn’t the case for Peter. Because his turkey was already being cooked in the oven.

‘Did he change the recipe?’

Because of the disastrous recipe of applying mustard, that scandal happened. If Peter knew how to think, then he would cook using another method.

Jo Minjoon looked away again. And his eyes fell on Kaya. She was observing them while being seated on a chair with a bored

expression. She could only be like that. Because, although they were preparing dinner, they were also preparing for the mission. Also, Kaya was the head chef. There wasn't a frying pan for her.

“The bread is done.”

Carlos, that was in charge of the baking, said. Unlike his brazilian like name, his face was whiter than white people, and his eyes were so blue it was uncomfortable to look at. However, the bagel that was baked in the oven had a dark brown colour that reminded you of brazilian people.

Kaya stood up from her seat as if the boring time had ended at last.

“Good, everyone gather. Let's start eating.”

Everybody stopped their hands and sat on their seats. The bagel Carlos served them was quite well cooked, but honestly speaking, it didn't suit well with Jo Minjoon's tastes. In the first place, Jo Minjoon didn't like bagels. And he also didn't like the kinds of cream cheese. After Jo Minjoon applied banana cream cheese to half of the half of the bagel, he stood up. It was his turn next.

The crab bisque had the role of being an appetizer. Jo Minjoon placed the dishes that contained raw crab meat and poured the bisque soup using a kettle. Honestly speaking, he needed other kind of ideas than when he cooked for the judges. Because he was going to be evaluated with the same competitors. Showing your report card to your teacher and to your friends could only be

different stories. But of course, if he followed the system, it was a score he didn't need to worry about much.

[Crab bisque soup]

Freshness: 81%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: Medium high (Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 7/10

It was unfortunate that the quality was middle high, but he could do nothing about that. Because the crab, that was the main for this dish, wasn't fresh but frozen. So he could only be dissatisfied while looking at the cooking score.

Jo Minjoon asked with a nervous expression.

“Is it delicious?”

“.....It's excellent. Although it's the first time I eat raw crab meat, I didn't think that it would be this tasty. It doesn't feel fishy at all.”

“Raw meat and bisque..... It's a funny combination.”

Everybody said good comments. It wasn't that they were talking formally. You wouldn't know about other things, but they weren't people to talk formally for cooking. Jo Minjoon laughed as if he was a little relieved. Looking at Jo Minjoon acting like this, Hugo smirked. It was a handsome but greasy smile typical of Spanish men.

“Even if you have an absolute sense of taste, you do get nervous when others try your food?”

“Of course. Because my tastes doesn’t become the standard for flavor.”

“Well, don’t worry. It’s a flavor that anyone will like if they don’t have an allergy or fear to crabs.”

“It would be fortunate if that was the case.”

Jo Minjoon smiled and then he looked at Kaya and Peter. Only them didn’t evaluate his dish. Peter opened his voice with an awkward face.

“It’s delicious.”

“.....Me too.”

Kaya followed with a low voice after Peter. And then, Peter slightly glanced at Kaya. However, Kaya rolled her eyes and ignored Peter. Jo Minjoon that saw that, sighed inwardly. Although it would be a strange think for them to act friendly right after they fought, but even so, he felt regret for Kaya’s attitude. Whatever the situation was, she was still the head chef.

But he rather felt that he was taking on the role of being head chef. And it was a situation he didn’t like much. If he had picked the head chef’s ball, so if he was head chef right now he would feel more comfortable. Because it was giving him the qualifications to do so.

However, she was still his teammate. Acting like her protector or taking her role was a funny thing. Jo Minjoon shut his mouth and turned his head. Soon, Chloe was coming with a cart that contained a well grilled sea bass, like a gueridon. The white sauce he saw at first glance, seemed to be a sauce made by mixing white russian and veloute sauce.

After he ate it, he could summarize his feelings with a few words. Delicious. Really delicious. Taking into account that grilling fish was a difficult thing, looking that the exterior was crispy but the interior was moist, the steak feeling it gave you could only be explained with the word pro.

The combination of the veloute sauce was also perfect. At first glance, it seemed to be carbonara sauce, but the non greasy sauce brought up the aroma of the sea bass to a new level. The juice that came out when he chewed the sea bass and the veloute sauce seemed to be only one.

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth while admiring.

“It’s.....it’s really delicious, Chloe.”

Chloe smiled brightly. But contrary to what he was expecting, what came out from her mouth was a question.

“Really? What’s the score?”

Jo Minjoon replied while smiling. Until when were they planning

to ask him the score?

“8 points.”

“He.....So this much is 8 points.”

Chloe looked at her dish absentmindedly. And the team members also ate the sea bass with a little different expression. They also knew that it was delicious before, but when Jo Minjoon said that it was an 8 points dish, the flavor was felt more luxurious and refined.

But the sweet atmosphere crumbled after that. It was Peter. It wasn't that he did something. Only that his turkey dish was the problem. The roasted turkey that was filled with herbs and vegetables wasn't that bad, but it was certainly not a dish that you could say it was good.

Precisely speaking, it was a dish to eat at home. He made and applied brown sauce in it, and accompanied it with some green onions.....But there was also a problem inside of that. They could sense a little burnt flavor in the brown sauce. It wasn't a dish to present to the customers.

The thing that caused him the most headache was the fact that even after presenting that kind of dish, he had asked for the score of his dish. And also with an expectant face. However, he couldn't tell him a good score just because of that. Because he didn't lie when it came to cooking.

“5 points.”



“And the top score is 10?”

“Yeah.”

“.....Leave it. Eat among yourselves. I will go upstairs first.”

Peter left the kitchen with a face filled with annoyance and disappointment, and unhappiness. In the low atmosphere, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth as if he had remembered of something.

“He left without washing the dishes.”

## Chapter 44: Unexpected Fame (1)

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While Kaya's team was in the middle of that, Martin was treating an unexpected customer. Emily Potter. It was her.

Of course, it wouldn't be too weird to see them together. Because in the first place, they were director and performer. But right now, Emily didn't seek Martin as a performer.

Emily smiled brightly.

"It's been a while, since we met in a place without cameras, Martin."

"Yes. But what happened? Are you going to agree to that proposal I made?"

Martin looked at her expectantly but Emily shook her head. Martin didn't get disappointed and asked.

"Then why.....?"

"Well, as you and I are both busy people I will go straight to the point. About that proposal, i'm thinking about it. About the tasting program that follows after Grand Chef."

"Saying that you are thinking about it means that you have some kind of proposal?"

"You are right. You really are tactful. I want Jo Minjoon."

At those words, Martin's face got strange. Only then did Emily

think that saying that she wanted Jo Minjoon could be interpreted in many ways. However, there was no need to correct it. Because Martin wasn't the kind of person to not know the meaning of it. He opened his mouth.

“Is it because of his talent in tasting?”

“Yes. If the performers of the program aren't set yet, you can at least put me and Jo Minjoon.”

“But what is Jo minjoon thinking.....?”

“That's not a problem I should be worrying about. Isn't the director in charge of recruiting?”

Emily's words were right. Martin fell in his thoughts. Aside from Jo Minjoon's opinion, he could only think if the combination was the ideal one. Originally, the program Martin thought of was about sending epicureans with good reputation on a tasting travel. However.

‘Will Jo Minjoon fit in that kind of place?’

Of course, it was true that Jo Minjoon's sense of taste was well developed. Wasn't the sensitiveness of his tongue not comparable to any of the epicureans? But although Jo Minjoon was a pearl, he was in a non polished state. He still felt unrest letting him star as an epicurean.

And Emily saw Martin's uneasiness.

“Of course, it would be a bit different to what you had in plan.

But I promise you. Although the direction changes a little, the fun wouldn't."

"I agree with that. Because aside from Jo Minjoon's talent, he can plently become a star."

"Then I will be waiting for a good response. Call me when you have decided."

"Whew.....The work has increased."

"Increased? Did you have other work to do?"

At Emily's question, Martin let out a sigh bitterly. He replied with an exhausted voice.

"There surged a little problem in Kaya's team. Precisely speaking, it would be better to say that discord formed."

"Well, I was also uneasy. Kaya is a good chef, but she's not the type to guide a person. Who did she clash with?"

"Peter Gray. It was him."

"Ah....."

Emily nodded as if she had understood. Peter's skill was fairly good, but his character was really back. But his skills were only good if you talked about the early stages of the qualifying rounds. The participants that survived didn't have bad skills, and compared to them, he had quite a lot of lacking points. And even Peter himself would be feeling that.

Even so, saying that a fierce character got fiercer wasn't a weird thing to say. Emily opened her mouth.

“However, isn’t it irrelevant? In your case, it would be better if that kind of trouble surges up because you can use it for broadcasting material. Shouldn’t you rather be more happy?”

“Of course, I should be if it was only broadcasted. But in the end, this broadcast flows through the participants. If by chance, a bad atmosphere spreads, their attitudes and emotions will also be transmitted through the screen. If you take into account the long term, it isn’t good.”

“In the end it’s that. That you have to take care of the participants mental health to a point. Right?”

“You are right.”

Martin nodded. It was at that moment. Emily fell in her thoughts for a moment and clapped her hands and opened her mouth.

“Now that I think about it, the fourth episode is broadcasted today, right? What is it about? Depending on the contents, the moods of the participants would also differ like heaven and earth.”

Martin replied with an awkward smile.

—

After finishing dinner, Jo Minjoon and the teammates all gathered in the resting room. Peter, that was feeling bad and went back to his room, came out as if he was also curious about the broadcast. It was also an obvious thing for the other team to come out. Jo Minjoon poked Marco’s side and asked.

“What did you get in charge of?”

“It’s a secret. They told me not to say it.”

“Ey, you can at least tell me that. Even so, it’s really obvious. It’s dessert right?”

Marco didn’t reply and rolled his eyes. It was at that moment. Anderson grabbed Marco’s arm and stood up from the place. Anderson was looking at Jo Minjoon coldly.

“What are you doing acting like a spy?”

“I’m a spy?”

“Of course, how else can you express stealing information?”

“Honestly, doesn’t it not matter?”

“You don’t know about that. So what are you in charge of?”

“I’m.....”

Jo Minjoon was about to reply when he frowned.

“You don’t want to tell me but you want me to tell you?”

“I want to say those words back at you.”

“Leave it. I’m not curious.”

Jo Minjoon snorted and turned his head. Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon acting like that, and after he laughed coldly he dragged Marco and said.

“Don’t play with the other team. Especially with that guy. He’s a

guy that has his insides black.”

“Ah, no..... Sorry Minjoon. I will leave.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson and Marco getting farther and put on a perplexed face. Anderson was Anderson, but looking at Marco, he couldn't help but feel a sense of betrayal. Could this feeling be described like when you were in school. When your friend you used to believe was your best friend goes and play with another guy when the class separates in half.

“You got dumped?”

Chloe sat next to him and asked teasingly. Jo Minjoon let out a laugh and replied.

“What are you talking about?”

Jo Minjoon looked back at Chloe. She was rather well dressed up. She was wearing a lined bandana on her head, and a red and white flowered one piece. Actually, it was a fashion he didn't know how to evaluate. It seemed like an alps girl from the 80's and a korean girl were standing in a boundary line. Jo Minjoon said awkwardly.

“Those clothes are pretty.”

“Really? Actually, I really like them.”

Maybe, if he had said that it was weird, she would have gotten depressed. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh of relief and changed the subject.

“And Peter?”

“He seemed to have calmed down a lot. Compared to before, he became milder.”

“What a relief. You made so he didn’t approach Kaya, right?”

“In the first place, even if I tried to make them see each other, they wouldn’t even get close.”

“Well, he also doesn’t want to get close to you.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. Saying the truth, it seemed like Peter was more disappointed than Kaya. Because he had bad mouthed them, and also evaluated his dish as a 5. He could think that he was hated. Chloe let out a sigh.

“You said what you needed to. You did well.”

“But I didn’t say that I regretted it.”

“You seemed bothered.”

“How could I get to that point?”

“It would be good if you are weren’t..”

Chloe talked like that and put on a light smile. It was a smile you couldn’t hate. Jo Minjoon shut his mouth and turned his head. The broadcast was starting.

The fourth episode was about the qualifying rounds, like it was announced previously. It started in Grand Chef’s house along the participant’s faces and admiration noises. Among those, there were unfamiliar faces and also ones that were not present in this



place.

After the participants, a scene which the judges presented Grand Chef passed, and after that was the catfish. The perplexed faces of the participants were shown in front of the wiggling catfish but among those, Jo Minjoon's comparatively calm face flashed through the screen. Chloe exclaimed and poked Jo Minjoon's shoulder.

“Did you see? Did you see? You appeared just then.”

“I did.”

Jo Minjoon replied with a calm voice and kept watching at the screen. And he could feel how competitive was that mission. There were many participants that were kicked out for not being able to trim the fish well. It was a situation where they had to shorten a hundred people to a few tens. The level of the evaluation was quite harsh, so he felt quite proud to have passed that mission.

While he was thinking about those things, the screen showed Jo Minjoon. It wasn't that he flashed by just like before, but a scene where he was cooking properly was shown. The way he was frying the catfish skin, and how he was making puré sauce. And aside from him, participants like Kaya, Anderson, Chloe or Hugo were also shown. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and said.

“.....I will be mentioned in the internet, right?”

“You don't want that?”

“I don't, but i'm also expecting to it. If only good words were posted, why would I not like it? However, the ill comments that

were casually posted were quite hurting.”

“If we are like that, then how hard should it be for Kaya? Whew, I would feel more comfortable if internet didn’t exist.”

At Chloe’s words, Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya. She was almost glaring at the TV from a separated seat with her usual cold face. Was she nervous? Jo Minjoon whispered to Chloe.

“Go next to Kaya. I think that if I go now, she will start to grumble.”

“Okay.”

Chloe got up and sat next to Kaya. Fortunately, Kaya didn’t get annoyed at her. Rather, a smile was formed in an instant, so it seemed that in heart, she wanted her to come.

The broadcast was soon ending. Good comments and bad ones from the participants were said, and after the logo of Grand Chef showed up, the screen turned black. It was at that moment when the participants started to stand up thinking that it had ended. The screen brightened up a little and it showed Jo Minjoon’s image.

And at that moment, Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. Because the ones that were on the screen were Kaya and himself. It seemed like they just inserted the sounds of their microphones, but in the TV only the sound of tableware clashing and the conversation from Kaya and Jo Minjoon was heard.

“It’s delicious.”

“Yours too.”

Making their lingering voices as the ending, the broadcast finally ended. Jo Minjoon couldn't help but get bewildered. Just what was that scene for them to edit it and to show it like a cut scene that came after a movie?

Hugo that was seated in front of them turned his head. He grinned and said.

“It's delicious.”

“Yours too.”

At Hugo's words, another voice was heard immediately. This voice was so close that he could even feel the heat coming from the mouth in his neck. As he looked back surprisedly, he saw Carlos looking at him treacherously. Jo Minjoon frowned and said.

“It's edited.”

“Carlos. Do you hear something?”

“What? A lie?”

“A conscience ripping sound.”

“.....You have to also get through that to get ahold of yourselves.”

Jo Minjoon replied hopelessly. It was at that moment when Carlos and Hugo were grinning and teasing Jo Minjoon. Joanne came running as if she was surprised at something. And she was

even wearing high heels.

“Loo, look at this. You rose in the search engines!”

“.....Who?”

Jo Minjoon asked thinking ‘maybe’. Joanne showed her handphone as if he was asking something obvious. Jo Minjoon’s face froze. The name, no, the names that rose in the portal’s search engine were quite familiar.

3 NEW — Jo Min Jun and Kaya Lotus

## Chapter 45: Unexpected Fame (2)

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This person was wiping the window which moon light passed through. There was a man seated on a sofa in the dark resting room. And that was Jo Minjoon. The TV that was turned on in front of him was broadcasting a famous talk show from a famous comedian. But his eyes weren't looking at the TV. The screen of the handphone he had in his hand was too enchanting to turn his attention to the TV.

Carl Casper : Why don't you change Grand Chef's name to Dating Chef? It made me confused as to what program I was watching.

└ Anna Thompson : I agree: Whether they are a couple that suit each other or not, I wish for the program I am watching right now to become a cooking program again.

└ Olivia Wesiz : @Anna Thompson Just because they insert a scene where they are playing cutely doesn't meant that it stops being a cooking program. For me, it was a good sight.

Dawnbreaker : I want to eat catfish. Why do I keep imagining the flavor of something I have never tried?

└ Meridia : I agree. I think that it would be perfect to eat for breakfast.

Harry Miller : Who do you think will win? For me.....

└ Kuroki Yui : Why did you stop talking? For me, it's Anderson. He does seem skilled, and his cold appearance is also cool, he's my type.

└ Bootes : Chloe for me. She's cute and at the same time pretty. I want her to win. I don't know why but I keep cheering for her.

└ Jessica Wood : @Kuroki Yui Rather than Anderson, Hugo or Carlos are more handsome. And they are more manlike. Oh right, that asian was also fine. The one who was eating with Kaya at the end. What was his name?

└ Kuroki Yui : @Jessica Wood It's Minjoon. Looking at him I started to think that he is a chef that resembles his cooking. I think that rather than being luxurious, his dishes were more sleek.

└ April : @Kuroki Yui Sleek? Him? The catfish meatballs seemed like shit. The one who is sleek is chef Alan.

Sansa Stark : Am I the only one who thinks that Marco is cute?

└ N N : The world is wide and personal tastes vary.

Arianna Sommer : Minjoon and Kaya really suited each other. I got the feeling I got back to high school.

└ Katy Jones : Tell them to differentiate the places. What the hell are they doing instead of cooking?

└ Yujin Smith :@Katy Jones No, actually we are driving them to that point. Was there something else they did rather than eating? If you want to say something do it to the director.

“And you were telling Kaya to not look at it.”

A voice was heard. Jo Minjoon glanced back. Chloe was putting a big sister like face looking at her spoiled little brother. Jo Minjoon didn't really reply back and turned off his handphone. His eyes that didn't know where to look, directed to the show program he wasn't even interested in. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“What are you doing at this hour?”

“That’s something I should be saying. Why aren’t you sleeping and staying here like this?”

“I wonder.....”

Jo Minjoon said and then fell in his thoughts. And that was about Chloe’s voice. Her voice was quite coarse and low unlike her pretty and cute appearance. It was a little different to having a husky voice. That was more suited to Kaya’s voice. If Kaya’s voice was one that suffered from a sore throat then, Chloe’s voice was more from someone catching a cold.

‘.....What am I thinking about?’

Jo Minjoon shook his head. Chloe asked.

“You just thought of something weird.”

“.....How did you know?”

“Because when people get speechless, they usually think of weird things.”

Chloe talked like that and stood up. She opened her mouth cautiously.

“It’s really amazing how people make up things. Just because they share food it is romance? Actually, it’s nothing like that.”

“.....Well, it’s a broadcast.”

At his words, Chloe smiled slightly. She opened her mouth.

“Now that I see, you said that you were going to tell your parents when you passed the mission, but it got postponed to tomorrow. Are you sad?”

“I don’t know. I wasn’t even thinking about that. Thank you for worrying.”

“Rather than being worried.....It just seems like looking at myself.”

“Why? Your mother isn’t opposed to you cooking.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t say the word ‘parents’ tactlessly. Although children from a separated family weren’t sad, they got hurt at a simple word. Chloe seemed to notice Jo Minjoon’s consideration and put on a soft and at the same time, sad smile.

“It’s not about opposition. It’s not that my relation with my parents is bad, but they can’t express themselves properly. And I know how hard and painful it can be.”

“... ..”

Jo Minjoon just touched his fingers without saying a thing. Hard and painful? It was something he had never thought of but listening to her and reflecting on it, it did seem like that was the case. Having your parents as an opponent and keeping it a secret was a heavy and tough thing to do.

“But Chloe, why did you come here? There are only good comments related about you, and it doesn’t seem like you are here



because of the comments.”

“What, I’m not a person? I got fluttered by the comments and couldn’t sleep. So I came here after exercising for a bit. There would probably be a lot of people like us. If you visit their rooms right now, nobody would be sleeping.”

“That’s probably right. But what about Kaya?”

“Well, she would be looking at the screen again. I think that Marco glanced at it and fell asleep, and guys like Hugo would probably be fighting in the comments.”

“Anderson would probably not check it because of his pride.”

“I think that those types of guys would check it from start to end.”

After talking like this for a while, his heart that was beating anxiously got relaxed. However, after worrying in one thing, he started to worry about another. Jo Minjoon exhaled air and said.

“Could Peter get calm?”

“He modified the recipe previously. To [tandoori chicken](#) breast and not turkey. Well, we will know about the detailed things after it with checking him, but he will get better.”

“.....Saying that his dish was 5 points, do you think that it was my mistake?”

“Even for me, it wouldn’t be strange for that dish to get a 5. If it was another person, they would forcefully evaluate it in a good way. But we are chefs. No, saying that we are chefs would be wrong. But even so, we have an objective to become one. So I think that you were right to be honest in his cooking. Maybe, if he can’t beat that honest opinion.....”

Chloe paused for a moment and smiled faintly. Even Jo Minjoon could know the meaning of that smile. The words Chloe couldn't bear to say, were said by Jo Minjoon.

“Right. He will not be qualified to be a chef.”

—

“Probably, it will be the first day for many of you to welcome a customer.”

Alan said. The kitchen's atmosphere was different than usual. Originally the countertops were lined in two lines but right now, they were in the shape of a square and split in two. It was clearly meant for the team mission. And the participants were already separated in each teams places.

“I won't talk for long. I want to stimulate you with the word 'first customer'. Make a good cooking and present a good dish. It's the end. Now, go and prepare!”

8:45 AM. They couldn't properly have breakfast and the mission already started. It couldn't be helped. Because the customers were going to come at twelve for lunch. To prepare properly, two hours weren't even that long.

“Are you all ready?”

At Kaya's rough voice, everyone nodded. Kaya was putting on a

face of a female evil warrior that came out from a movie, and said.

“I will organize the recipes one last time and leave. Carlos will make the bagel with banana cream cheese, and after that Jo Minjoon will make crab bisque soup. The main will be Chloe’s roasted bass. And.....”

Kaya paused after that. Her eyes were directed at Peter. But Peter didn’t look back at her and was only staring at the floor. Kaya’s eyes twitched for a moment, but she didn’t express it and continued talking.

“Peter will make tandoori chicken breast. And Hugo the ossobuco. ....The ossobuco was delicious. Hugo. Just make it like before.”

“Yes sir.”

Hugo smiled and saluted. Jo Minjoon nodded unconsciously. The ossobuco made by Hugo was certainly delicious. An italian dish you made by boiling down calf marrow in white wine and steaming it. The flavor was certainly deep, just like the home flavor of Italy. The cooking score was 7. But the flavor was way above that.

“Joanne will make caprese salad, Tony the choco mochi and Ivanna the [orange sherbet](#). Joanne, Ivanna. Don’t forget to make it fast and serve it after that. Minjoon, you know that you have to help too in serving, right?”

“Yes.”

“Good. We are done. Let’s start!”

As Kaya shouted, everyone started to bring their ingredients. And Jo Minjoon was the same. The ingredients didn't change to the time he was serving his teammates last night.

When he was peeling and taking of the shell of the crab, Kaya got close and watched what Jo Minjoon was doing. Jo Minjoon asked in a low voice as if he was whispering.

“And Peter? Do you think he's doing well?”

“I wonder. I think that I would ruin it if I went there.”

“Even so, you have to go. Perhaps he would be waiting for reconciliation.”

“.....Okay.”

Kaya put on a face that didn't really like the idea and walked towards Peter. It wasn't a good atmosphere, but even so, it was good for them to converse. Jo Minjoon continued to focus on his dish. This time, there were pros and cons while boiling bisque soup in a huge quantity.

The advantage was that the flavor deepened. Just like every soup, the more you boiled bisque soup, the deeper the flavor would become.

The disadvantage was that the amount was too much to handle. Even if the soup burnt below the pot, with this much amount, it was difficult to even feel the aroma, so it was also difficult to check the state of it. A chef that was smelling the bisque soup for

minutes, no, for hours would find it difficult to detect that it was getting burnt. Because his nose became dull.

Of course, Jo Minjoon could check the cooking score of the finished dish through the system. But if he checked after the dish was done, it became too late. He couldn't permit any mistakes, and for that he couldn't let his arms rest and stop stirring the soup.

And the quality of the bisque soup that was made carefully didn't fall behind to yesterday's soup. Jo Minjoon looked at the soup with a satisfied expression.

Now, he only had to maintain the temperature and serve it to the customers. Of course, making a huge amount at a time wasn't something good to do, but it was unavoidable for a restaurant. They just couldn't adjust the timing to keep making any kinds of soup and serving it to the customers.

“The customers have arrived! What are you doing and not serving!”

Alan yelled in a haggard voice. Carlos held the bagel and banana cream cheese he had made and moved. And after that, it was the turn of Jo Minjoon. It was at that moment when he was putting the dish that contained crab meat and a kettle filled with bisque soup and proceeding towards the dining room. Some of the customers that were having their meal looked at Jo Minjoon and nodded as if they knew who he was. And some, even pointed at him.

He felt a bit embarrassed. In his mouth, a smile he didn't know the reason of, started to show. He wanted to be as expressionless as he could, but he just couldn't hold it. In the end, Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly and kept walking. In the first table, there were two people that seemed like a couple. Jo Minjoon placed the dish that contained the crab meat, and poured the bisque soup.

“It's crab bisque soup. I recommend you to first savor the soup, and then the crab meat.”

“Did you make this?”

“Yes. I made this dish.”

“Oh, this feeling is quite strange? Just yesterday I gulped and drooled while looking at the catfish meatball stew you made. But this seems even more delicious. Right, Clark?”

“Hmm..... It's my first time eating crab.”

The man that was named Clark, looked at the soup that was placed in front of him with an unfamiliar face. Jo Minjoon laughed softly and opened his mouth.

“It won't feel fishy at all.”

“.....First, I will try the soup.”

Clark hesitated a moment and extended his spoon. Jo Minjoon looked nervously at his spoon. It went in his mouth. Clark closed his eyes as if he was savouring it, and soon, opened it widely and moved his spoon again. Twice, three times. And on that spoon, the crab meat he said he was unfamiliar with was placed on top. The man that chewed the crab meat widened his eyes and said.

“Wow.....this, my god. The crab meat melts even before I chew it. Just why..... it’s delicious. It really is.”

“I also think like Clark. It is delicious. Thanks for the good food.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t reply and just smiled. It was a smile that didn’t even have a trace of being fake, but filled with happiness. He felt fluttered. The words from the judges were completely different than the customers saying that it was delicious.

It was at that moment. The woman grinned and asked.

“Did you also seduce Kaya like this? With your dish?”

Jo Minjoon laughed helplessly and replied.

“She did say that it was delicious.”

## Chapter 46: Unexpected Fame (3)

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There were two reasons he didn't serve the crab meat with bisque soup together. The first reason was because if the crab meat got over cooked, the softness would disappear. So it was best to serve the soup the latest he could.

The second reason was simple. Service. The more luxurious a restaurant got, the price got more expensive. And what was included in the price wasn't simply the food. There were many places where the head chef would personally come to explain the food on two or three star michelin restaurants.

And the one who was pouring the bisque soup wasn't only Jo Minjoon. Kaya too was helping him serve. For the customers, it was a good thing. Because Kaya was one of the most popular participants of Grand Chef. Specially, it was more fun to see if she was together with Jo Minjoon, who had made a scandal with her.

There were even customers who asked them to stand together for a minute. But the director didn't particularly stop them. They weren't asking something excessive, and they were funnily giving him broadcasting material, so he had no need to do so.

Of course, the result of that was the exhaustion for both of them. Kaya took a short breath and looked at the tables. While she was serving the bisque soup, the customers showed so much interest to the point she felt burdened.

To smile at them wasn't a difficult task. Because when she



worked in the market, there were several occasions where she had to put on a fake smile. However, it was also true that it exhausted you mentally.

And right at this moment, Kaya was more exhausted than ever.

The last customer for lunch. Jo Minjoon and Kaya were standing nervously. They could only do so. On that table, was seated a familiar face. Emily, and also Joseph. But the one they had to be aware of was Emily. Because she was in charge of evaluating the blue team, Kaya's team, and Joseph was in charge of Jacob's team. What Joseph had to evaluate was the dinner, and Alan had to look and evaluate at the participants that were in the kitchen and not the tables.

“Can you explain to me what kind of dish this is?”

At her words, Kaya glanced at Jo Minjoon. He opened his mouth and said calmly.

“I'm going to pour bisque soup in a not cooked crab meat. Yes, just like this. The aroma of the bisque soup will seep inside the meat but inside of it, the delicious and sweet flavor only crabs have will be felt. I will recommend you concentrating on that point. And first, drink the soup.”

Emily followed Jo Minjoon's words and drank a spoonful of soup, and then, ate it along with crab meat. In her mouth, a faint smile appeared. It seemed like she wasn't completely satisfied, but at least, it was not a dissatisfied face.

“It’s good. Ah, the proper evaluation will be done after the mission. Go and keep working.”

“Yes.”

They replied like that but actually, there was nothing left to do. At least, it was like this right now. There weren’t even people who had finished their soups to withdraw their plates. Jo Minjoon whispered to Kaya that was standing next to him.

“Go to the kitchen. Chloe’s sea bass should start coming out.”

“Ah, okay. I understand.”

Kaya massaged her own neck and went in the kitchen. Chloe had already finished roasting the sea basses. Kaya opened her mouth.

“Is it done?”

“Wait a minute, I’m doing the plating.”

Chloe carefully placed the sea bass on top of the [velouté](#) sauce. The side that got in contact with the sauce was the meat part that wasn’t covered by the skin. If the skin got wet with the sauce, then there was no point to roast it crisply. She placed thyme that was the size of a nail, and the plating was done. Kaya opened her mouth while watching her work.

“I will help you. You don’t mind right?”

“Of course.”

Kaya opened her mouth while assisting her.

“The reaction for Minjoon was good. Now’s your turn.”

“Mmm.....I’m suddenly feeling burdened.”

“I said it because of that.”

Kaya talked like that and grinned. Although it seemed ill-natured, it was her way to express herself. Chloe wasn’t so small minded as to refute that to a girl that wasn’t even in her twenties and didn’t know how to express herself.

There were a total of twenty roasted breems placed in two carts. When Chloe and Kaya were pulling the cart and getting to the dining room, Jo Minjoon got in the kitchen. And he was also pulling the cart that contained the empty dishes. There were no dishes that had bisque soup left. Chloe slightly laughed.

“You are the best.”

Jo Minjoon laughed but didn’t reply. There was nothing happier for a chef for the customers to eat and not leave a thing on the dish.

As Chloe praised Jo Minjoon, she felt her heart beating more wildly. The cooking was well done. At least, it was for her. However, if the customers said that it wasn’t delicious, Chloe wasn’t confident on being able to overcome that situation.

“It will be delicious.”

Kaya opened her mouth. Chloe looked at her because she felt like she had been seen through. Kaya evaded Chloe's eyes and continued to say.

"You cook well. The sea bass I ate yesterday was good, and it's not the point to come all the way here and become a mistake. This plate right now, I'll bet one dollar that they will eat everything including the sauce."

".....But 1 dollar is not much."

"Shut up."

Kaya snorted and turned her head. Chloe laughed and opened her mouth.

"Thank you."

But a reply didn't come back. Maybe she wasn't accustomed to getting compliments? Or was she sulking because she said that the dollar wasn't much? She was curious, but she could only keep it for after she was done. Soon, the cart was getting in the dining room.

"Wow, Chloe! This time I get to see your cooking. The dishes I saw in the broadcast all seemed delicious."

"Thank you. I hope that this dish won't disappoint you."

"Can I take a picture with you later?"

"Yes. First, take a picture of this dish. I think that you will want to do that more than taking a picture with me."

Chloe smiled brightly and replied. And it was not only for that customer. Every time she placed the plate in the table, Chloe made eye contact with every customer and smiled brightly.

Normally, it could be easy to look at that as a job smile. But Chloe was different. The people that saw that smile all felt their heads brighten. It was that bright and vivid. It was so much that it made someone who thought that the smile was made up to feel guilty.

She had a different character to Kaya or Jo Minjoon, a really clear and fresh feeling was felt from her. Chloe's smile made the customers to be able to eat their dish in a more happy and comfortable way. Because even until now, they were shocked at the amounts of cameras so they couldn't enjoy the meal comfortably. But now, they were a lot more relaxed. And that was also seen with another meaning.

Precisely speaking, it was seen in Jo Minjoon's eyes.

[Chloe's friendly and gentle attitude makes the customers feel more comfortable.]

[The 'roasted sea bass with veloute sauce' brings the utmost of its flavor.]

Saying the truth, he didn't even need to see that window. It was obvious. If the chef treats you with that kind of face, with that kind of smile you could only enjoy your meal, except if it was not delicious. Jo Minjoon mumbled in a low voice.

“Did I learn something new?”

“Learn what?”

At the unexpected voice, Jo Minjoon got surprised and looked at his side. He didn't know when he came but Anderson was checking at the customers with his arms crossed. Jo Minjoon calmed his surprised heart and replied.

“I mean Chloe. To the customers..... How do I have to say this.... Treat well? Act gently? Something's lacking. Right. To smile and serve them honestly. With just that, the atmosphere which the customers have their meal changes completely.”

“That's obvious.”

“Even though it was obvious, I can't do it well. To make a smile so bright as to the person that's watching you feels good.”

At those words Anderson snorted. He opened his mouth and said coldly.

“If there are people like Chloe, then people like you and me should exist. Take into account that all of the chefs smile like that. Rather, they would prefer meaner chefs.”

“That's right. ....But why are you here? Aren't you in charge of the main?”

“Because I have time to spare. I only finished the preparations. Don't ask beyond that. I'm not getting deceived by a spy.”

“You really like calling me a spy.”

Anderson didn't reply. It was at that moment. Kaya was coming

towards them with her cart with empty plates. Precisely speaking, she was walking towards the kitchen that was behind them. When they looked at her unconsciously, Kaya frowned and looked at Anderson.

“Don’t put on that trashy posture. You are blocking the door.”

Only then did Anderson realize that he was blocking the door. Anderson blushed his ears and got out of the way. Kaya got past Anderson and said to Jo Minjoon.

“If you don’t have anything to do then follow me.”

“Why, do you have something to make me do?”

“If you don’t, I’ll make something. Come. And don’t play with the red team’s bitch.”

“Bitch..... Did you say that to me?”

“Shut up. If you feel bad become the head chef.”

Kaya didn’t even look at him and went past him. Jo Minjoon’s mouth was half open as if he found it absurd and followed Kaya’s back. And then asked.

“If Anderson is the red team’s bitch, then am I the blue team’s bitch?”

“Why, you don’t like being my bitch?”

“Is there someone that likes being one?”

“Then I will make you the captain bitch.”

“What if I still don’t like it?”

“.....This crazy.”

Jo Minjoon thought that those last words were directed at Kaya herself. However Kaya's eyes weren't directed at Jo Minjoon, but was fixed in front. Jo Minjoon slowly followed that gaze. And he too, stiffened his face.

[Tandoori chicken breast]

Freshness: 87%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High(Average ingredients)

Cooking score: 3/10

He believed in him. That even if he did make a mistake, his cooking level was basically level 6. He believed that he wouldn't make the same mistakes twice.

But it was a disaster. Jo Minjoon looked dumbfoundedly at the tandoori chicken breasts that were in front of him. It was chicken breast applied with India's traditional masala sauce, that was tandoori chicken breast. However the thing that was in front of him couldn't even be called tandoori.

“.....How did this get this burnt?”

Kaya replied coldly. Peter was pale even at first glance and opened his mouth stuttering.



“I, I put it in the oven but.....it seems like I only preheated the lower side of the oven. I looked at the top and it still seemed raw so I kept it in, but the lower part.....”

“Are you stupid? No, are you a spy? Preheat only the lower side? What were you doing without even checking that simple thing? You said you wanted to do the main. That you were confident. But is that only this dirtily burnt chicken breast that’s similar to your face? I even feel sad calling this chicken breast. Peter. Answer me. Are you really stupid? If you are, then I would at least bear with it. Don’t just keep your leech like disgusting lips closed and reply to me, you fucking stupid!”

Kaya poured out curses severely. However, no one was planning to stop her. It was a team mission. And everyone’s fates were in the line. But to make that kind of mistake in this kind of mission. Their luck wasn’t good, it wasn’t a thing to just let it pass.

Peter twitched his brows for a moment and let out a sigh. It would be a lie to say that he didn’t get angry at Kaya’s words, but if he got angry in this kind of situation, it was obvious that he would only worsen it. Peter calmed his heart the most he could and tried his best to say some words.

“The burnt parts..... I will remove the burnt parts and serve it. So give me some time.....”

“What? Are you crazy? Not only did the chicken breast get burnt, but did you also burn your brain? To present this kind of thing to the customer? Are you planning to kill someone? Please, think. They say that indians are intelligent. I thought like that too, but maybe that isn’t the case? Or only you are stupid? No, this isn’t even a problem of being stupid or not. How dirty of a human are

you to make the customers that came to eat your dish, eat this piece of coal? Honestly, I thought that I was the most straightforward person in this program, but I wasn't. Amazing. Really amazing."

Peter couldn't reply back anything. He was slicing off the burnt parts of the chicken breast as if he didn't listen anything. Kaya was glaring at him for a moment and extended her hand. That hand grabbed the chicken breast Peter was slicing. Peter looked back at Kaya's hands sulking. Kaya said while grinding her teeth.

"Listen well. This, is trash. And."

Kaya emptied her hand. The thrown chicken breast fell in the trash bin. Kaya continued speaking.

"There are no chefs that serve trash on a dish."

## Chapter 47: Unexpected Fame (4)

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The atmosphere got cold. Maybe they were surprised at Kaya's curses, or they agreed with her at getting angry.....Nobody from the team could open their mouths. And the red team looked at Kaya and whispered by themselves.

And it was the same for Alan. As the judge in charge of the kitchen, he understood how Kaya was feeling and her rage. However the problem was after that. How will she lead her teammate after exploding in rage? Alan looked at what they were doing with a more serious look.

Kaya took in deep breaths coarsely. Peter didn't reply anything back and just looked down at the chopping board. He was angry. To Kaya and to himself. Grand Chef was also an opportunity for him. An opportunity that presents only a couple of times. And right now, that opportunity was trying to leave from his sight. He couldn't not be angry.

But he couldn't shout back. Because the responsibility of this disaster was on himself. Peter wasn't a stupid person as to not be able to think of that.

“.....I'm sorry.”

Peter said disheartenedly. Kaya, that was prepared to go another round at it if he was planning to refute her, in the end shut her mouth and glared at him. Only after a long while did she turned her head back. She also looked for a while at Hugo and opened her

mouth.

“Hugo. The ossobuco, you can’t present it first right?”

“Are you kidding? Even if I don’t do well from now on, I will at least need twenty minutes more for it to have a proper flavor. It’s absolutely a no right now.”

“.....In the end I will have to decide here. If I’m going to remove the middle main dish, or if I’m going to take care of it.”

Kaya looked at Peter. Peter wasn’t saying a thing and just looking down. Kaya let out a sigh and said.

“What are you going to do? Decide quick. There’s almost no time. The maximum we can get late is at most 15 minutes. Think about a dish you can make in that time.”

“Wait.....Wait.”

“Whew, Minjoon. You too, think. If you have no ideas, we can’t help it but to skip this part.”

“I’m thinking.”

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes and fell in his thoughts. Because when he closed his eyes, the system’s window was seen more clearly in that dark world. It soon became a habit when he started to design something.

He didn’t even know how he got that kind of habit. And actually, even if Peter’s tandoori chicken breast was well roasted, it also became a problem. Because the masala sauce that was full of strong spices, was enough to kill all the flavor that came afterwards. It

meant that it would sink the flavor of the soon upcoming ossobuco.

Peter said that he wanted to make salad to catch that heavy flavor, but Jo Minjoon was opposed to that. Because the score the system was showing him was only 6. It wasn't that good of a score. And Jo Minjoon was sure that the cause of that low score was the tandoori chicken breast.

He did say that he was opposed to it, but Peter's attitude was just too stubborn. If it was right now, he thought that he would be able to change the menu completely.

However it was a short thinking. Because that was only if he had enough time to think of a recipe. Even if he thought of many recipes in his head, there were no recipes that surpassed 6 points. It could only be that way. 15 minutes. They had to make a dish that didn't last longer than that. And thinking of a recipe that wouldn't disturb the flavor of the dish that would come after that and was delicious at the same time wasn't an easy thing to do.

“What about mixing mozzarella and fresh avocado and making a simple chicken steak?”

“It would be too greasy. Preferably.....”

Jo Minjoon stopped for a moment. The recipe he thought of in his head was only 6 points. However, in case he included cooking, he could raise the score to 7. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth nervously.

“Saying the truth, this dish is nothing special. However, it won’t disturb the entire flow. First, roast chicken breast with olive oil. Then fry some shallots with that oil. And after that let’s make a creamy cheese sauce using tarragon, lemon juice, herbs and goat cheese. The herbs and the lemon juice would catch the greasiness, and it won’t be bad at all.”

“Good. And the garnish?”

“That. What was it? God damnit, I don’t remember. Right. The salad Peter prepared. Let’s just put it there. Do you think it’s going to be okay?”

“Good. Peter. You understood right?”

At Kaya’s sharp voice, Peter just nodded with his face stiffened. Actually it was even harder to complaint.

Kaya slightly glanced at her surroundings. Carlos had made the bread a while ago, but was continuing to serve the customers in the hall. Chloe was also in the hall, and excluding Jo Minjoon and Peter, everyone were doing their own dishes. Realistically, the only ones who could make the chicken dish were those three. Kaya’s face hardened.

“Let’s go with chicken tenderloin instead of chicken breast. We are roasting the tenderloin whole and applying the sauce Minjoon said. What are you doing? Quickly put the pan on fire! Minjoon, help.”

“I will prepare the sauce. You and Peter do the chicken tenderloin. Will you be fine?”

“Yes. Understood.”

After Peter replied, Jo Minjoon immediately brought the ingredients. The first thing he did was to chop the shallots. Originally, he had planned to sauté the shallots in the oil he had used to roast the chicken breast, no, now the chicken tenderloin, but he didn't have the time to do so.

He cooked the shallots until it turned soft, and placed the herbs, goat cheese, lemon juice and tarragon on the pan. Although you would feel the smell of the cheese melting, to be delicious, but depending on the person, the longer you smelled it, the more it repugned you. And Jo Minjoon was the type to be repugned by it.

Still, it was good that lemon juice and the tarragon's aroma caught the aroma of the cheese. Of course, it didn't matter for the customers. Because this was before they put the food in their mouths.

“Kaya. Is the tenderloin done?”

“Soon. And the sauce?”

“It's done. What should we do with the sauce? Should we spread it in the plate, or place it on top of the tenderloin?”

“Of course you have to place it on top. Wait a moment. It will soon be done.”

Kaya was talking like that and was handling the frying pans that were all around. She seemed to be quite busy. But it was understandable. Because she was handling four frying pans by herself. And next to her was Peter that was sweating and turning the side of the chicken tenderloin.

Jo Minjoon moved his feet. It wasn't to Kaya but to Peter. Kaya seemed to do fine even if he left her alone, but he was insecure about Peter. He couldn't help but think that his mind got unstable and made a decisive mistake.

But fortunately, no such things happened. Peter's chicken tenderloin was almost perfectly roasted. He couldn't also check the seasoning, but the exterior that got seared was good to see. It wasn't excessive, and wasn't lacking. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes.

“Do you want me to give you a plate?”

“.....Thank you.”

“Wait a moment.”

Jo Minjoon brought the plates and placed them on top of the countertop. And wondered for a moment. To place the salad below, or next to the tenderloin. But of course, he didn't take long. An oriental sauce was already applied in the salad. If he placed it below and the cheese sauce of the chicken got mixed, it was a result he didn't even want to imagine.

Chloe came in when he had almost done the setting of the salads. She, who was pulling the cart, asked with a perplexed face.

“Huh? Shouldn't the next dish have been tandoori?”

“It got burnt. So we changed it hurriedly.”

“.....It should have been hard. Are you okay, Peter?”

At that moment Jo Minjoon couldn't help but get surprised.



Normally, you couldn't help but get angry, but in that short moment when she worried about Peter instead of getting angry, she seemed really pretty.

‘The man who marries Chloe should be happy for eternity.’

He wouldn't even feel the trial life gives you as a trial. Because right now, Peter was also sloppily smiling back at Chloe. It was at that moment. Kaya opened her mouth.

“Chloe. The dishes that are in your cart. They aren't the sea bass one's right?”

“Why shouldn't they be? They thankfully ate them all. They even wiped out the sauce.”

“.....I'll get crazy. Doesn't that mean that the table is empty right now?”

Kaya's hands that was placing the chicken tenderloin in the dishes got busier. Chloe was calmly helping Kaya. Jo Minjoon poured the cheese sauce that was in the pan, on top of the chicken tenderloin. Kaya let out a sigh as if she was taking a breath. And then opened her mouth.

“Peter. Come with me. It's your dish. So you should explain.”

“.....Understood.”

The two of them got out with the carts to serve. Jo Minjoon checked their actions while standing in the entrance of the hall. And the reactions of the customers weren't as bad as he had

thought. Only, Emily's reaction was quite cold. She ate only a few bites and placed down the fork. A smile could be seen on her face, but she didn't seem satisfied.

It couldn't be helped but for her to be like that. Even with Kaya's skills, she couldn't bring out the flavor of a hurriedly made recipe more than it could. And they had also made a difficult to handle dish like chicken tenderloin in a short time.

However, the ossobuco that came out after that, raised the sunken atmosphere. And at that moment, Jo Minjoon also got surprised.

The cooking score of the ossobuco was 8.

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Hugo's cooking level was 6. And the ideology Jo Minjoon had until now was that the utmost you could do if your cooking level was 6, was cooking a 7 points dish. He just thought like that. Because, when he started to make 7 points dish, it was when he had reached cooking level 6.

But that wasn't the case. Hugo was certainly level 6, and the ossobuco was 8 points. He didn't have the time to organize that situation. Because when lunch ended, they had to immediately prepare for dinner, and after cooking and serving, the time of judging soon approached.

Jo Minjoon looked at the judges. The one who opened their mouth first was Emily. She looked at the participant's faces

without a trace of smiling.

“You have done your best. And I think that it was the best you could have done. I can still see some lacking points, but even so, some dishes were really good. Chloe. Hugo. Anderson and Marco. You were the ones to have made me the happiest today.”

Jo Minjoon didn't get frustrated because he wasn't named. He felt it regrettable, but he understood. Because the names Emily called, had all displayed level 8 dishes. Chloe the sea bass, Hugo the ossobuco. Anderson displayed steamed lobster. And Marco made tart with chiboust cream.

“There were exactly two in the red team, and two in the blue. So I wondered even more. But, I have decided. I'm.....”

Emily looked at the chip that was in her hands. In front of her was placed one red box and one blue one with the votes of the 40 customers. And her hands were directed at the blue box.

“It's the blue team. Actually, the satisfaction of the entire course was similar. But the dish that suited me the most of those four dishes was the ossobuco..... And the server who had made me feel most comfortable was Chloe. Chloe, I think that your smile as a person, and not only as a chef is a really valuable treasure. Maybe, if you open your own restaurant, and that exact same smile still remains..... I think that I would become a regular customer of your restaurant.”

“Tha, thank you.”

Chloe couldn't hide her embarrassment and happiness and smiled brightly. Emily smiled teasingly and pointed at her.

“But that smile is a bit weak. Be more confident, Chloe. You are an excellent chef. Regarding of the results of this competition, I'm already your fan. Remember that. The restaurant that receives love by an epicurean usually has good results.”

“Yes!”

Chloe clenched her two fists and yelled. Emily smiled brightly and stepped back. Joseph walked to the front. He didn't hesitate for a moment and put the chip in the red box. It happened so instantly, so the participants and even the casting crew were all dumbfounded. Joseph said in a calm voice.

“I won't be showing favoritism with the vote. Even so, the votes of we, judges, are irrelevant comparing to the 43. And the reason I picked the red team is simple. I ate the red team's cooking more deliciously than the blue team. Especially Marco, your tart was perfect. I am convinced that you are the participant that makes bread better than anyone else here. The words Emily said to Chloe, I would like to tell you the same things. Be confident. It's also good to be prideful. Because the decisive factor I picked the red team was your tart.”

Marco didn't reply. He couldn't. His big eyes were filled with tears and he was sniffing right now. Anderson, that was next to him, put on a hesitating face and patted his back. Joseph stepped back. It was Alan's turn. Alan said with a cold and harsh voice.

“I don’t know about what was placed in the dishes, but you were a spectacle today. You were dumber and noisier than a monkey, and some team even changed the recipe in the middle. What I am evaluating today is not the dish, but your knives, chopping board and frying pan.”

Nobody replied. Peter especially had his head dropped with a pale face. He could only do that. Alan lifted his chip.

“The red team should also know well. That the blue team did a really stupid thing. Kaya. Reply as a head chef. What is the meaning of changing the recipe?”

“.....It means that the food is changing.”

“It’s similar but different. It means that the order got changed. But of course, today it wasn’t an order, but a predefined menu. However if it was on another situation, you wouldn’t be receiving money, and even if you got cursed you wouldn’t be able to talk back at all. Chloe’s smile? Service? What’s the meaning of that? Of you made a mistake in the most basic thing that’s cooking.”

Kaya didn’t reply back and dropped her head. She wasn’t thinking of handing down all of the responsibility to Peter. Because in the time Peter was making the mistake, she didn’t check so it was also partially her fault. Alan slowly put his hand that was holding the chip in the red box. Alan continued with his cold face.

“The reason I am voting for the red team today is not because they did well. Only because the opposing blue team acted really stupidly. Remember that. The food is made in the kitchen. And if that process is careless, then the results will also be it. Become perfect. You are the doctors and the ingredients are the patients.

You have to be more perfect than anyone else. Because the customers aren't expecting for a mistake."

Peter bit his lips. It seemed like those words were all directed at him like arrows. Alan checked at Peter for a moment, then shut his mouth and fell back. Joseph let out a sigh. When that sigh was slowly heard by everyone, his voice rang again.

"We will start counting the votes."

## Chapter 48: Unexpected Fame (5)

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Gulp.

A gulping sound was heard. It was Jo Minjoon. He looked at the chips that were coming out of the boxes with a serious face. Blue team one, red team one. Blue team eleven, red team eleven. It was at the moment when they each had seventeen chips, with a total of thirty four coming out when Alan opened his mouth.

“Now, one of the boxes doesn’t have any more chips.”

The participants just heard that as a declaration. Alan looked at Jacob.

“Jacob. Do you think that your team will win?”

“Yes.”

“And what’s the reason for you to be saying that?”

“I believe in my teammates.”

“Do you think that you have performed the role of the head chef well?”

“It’s a difficult question for me to answer. I think that my teammates would be having the answer.”

Alan just looked at Jacob. His eyes seemed intricate and nervous rather than gentle. Jacob didn’t evade his sight. Alan said in a low tone of voice.

“If you have to pick someone from your team that performed the best, who would you pick?”

“.....It’s troublesome. It would be too simple to say that everyone did well. Fine. I will pick Marco. Because it was the only dish we didn’t even have to wash.”

“Then, if you have to pick the person that performed the worst, who would you pick?”

Jacob couldn’t reply immediately. He could only be like that. Because if he named someone, in the end, that person would only get hurt. And there were no particular people that made such a mistake as to bad mouth like that. Jacob replied with an awkward voice.

“I will pick myself. I tried to adjust to the head chef’s seat, but I don’t get the feeling to have completed my role well.”

At those words, Alan didn’t say anything. In the middle of the nervousness, only silence could be heard, and only after a while did Alan smile.

“You seemed to be replying trying to evade my question, but your answer seems to be quite true. I won’t refute that. I will only say a word. Jacob. You have done the best as a head chef. Remember that.”

“Thank you.”

As the conversation between the two ended, Kaya’s face became ugly. Because it was obvious who Alan was going to target next. Alan turned his head to look at Kaya. Chloe that was next to her,



wiped the sweat that was on Kaya's forehead with a towel nervously. Alan that was looking at them expressionlessly opened his mouth.

“Kaya. I will also make the same question to you. Do you think that you are going to win?”

“I don't know. Because in the end, you just have to look at the results. So why are you asking me this? If you ask me if I'm going to lose I would reply that I wasn't confident, but if I say that I'm going to win, then it will be a proofless confidence. Isn't that right?”

At Kaya's bold question, almost all of the people that were next to her laughed bitterly. They knew well about Kaya's temperament, but they never thought that she would be able to speak so challengingly to a judge like Alan. Was it a bluff? Or did she only know to reply like that?

Alan didn't get angry. Because those words weren't so harsh for him to get angry. She had just hit the mark. And Kaya's eyes were also slanting, but there was no need to point out things like this one by one. Because he was a judge and not a teacher. Alan said unconcernedly.

“I won't mind about what you reply. Just do so. Are you confident?”

“I told you. That you have to see to know. I don't know.”

Alan's eyes twitched. Saying the truth, he felt a bit perplexed. Because he never thought that he would listen to this sort of

answer. However, now that he looked clearly, it seemed that Kaya that had said those words seemed more perplexed. It seemed like she had never expected to say those things that sharply. Alan took a short breath and opened his mouth.

“Then, I will go with the next question. Who was the most excellent chef?”

“Hugo and Chloe. Oh, right. I understand. It was only one person. Chloe. I will go with Chloe. Actually their dishes were similarly delicious. However, If you take into account the serving, Chloe was better. Because she smiles really brightly. She’s cute and pretty unlike me. The customers like her very much.”

“.....Don’t you think that if you fix that temperament of yours, the customers will like you very much for how you look?”

“So, did you fix it chef? Your mean character.”

Alan smiled instead of replying. Saying the truth, it was something he shouldn’t be saying. Because he wasn’t the type to smile brightly at the customers. Alan continued his questions. Even he wasn’t accustomed to asking questions, but because this was a broadcast, he couldn’t just let it pass.

“This is the last question. Who’s the teammate that performed the worst?”

At that moment, many participants unconsciously looked at Peter. It was understandable. Because he was the person who had made a shocking scene like burning his dish.

Kaya didn’t try to look good and seem considerate by not saying

his name. Because whatever she did, it was still a miserable situation. Rather than a sloppy consideration, it would be more comfortable to say one honest word.

“He burnt the fine chicken. It would be difficult not saying that it was Peter.”

“And what about you? Don’t you think that you were lacking as head chef letting him do that kind of thing?”

“When did I say that I didn’t have any fault? I was just comparing. The stupid teammate that can’t even properly preheat the oven and burn his own dish, and the head chef that couldn’t properly check that teammate. Even if you see it objectively, the most stupid one should be the teammate.”

It was an excessively honest statement. The casting crew were looking at this situation like a funny scene and laughing, but Jo Minjoon that was looking at her couldn’t help but feel nervous. Because the not pretentious honesty can be seen as rude. And the public used to focus on the bad points rather than the good ones.

She was more concerned and afraid of bad comments rather than the judges, and the only words that came out of her were only those kinds of things. Of course, her very existence would make for a funny character, but the time that character gets accepted by the media won’t be short. Because they already felt rejected when seeing the scene of Jo Minjoon and Kaya.

Kaya opened her mouth.

“Perhaps, did I have to reply that I was the worst one? I didn’t

really get a script.”

“.....Enough. Let’s finish the interview here.”

Alan talked like that and put his hand on the red box. And Emily that was next to him also put her hand in the blue box and said.

“One of our hands should be empty. If my hand is empty the red team wins, but if Alan’s hand is empty the blue team will win. Count down, will you do it? Now, count to three!”

At Emily’s words, everyone yelled together. And it was the same for Jo Minjoon. The voices that were heard were filled with expectation.

One.

Two.

Three.

—

After the announcement of the result ended, all of the participants went to the interviewing room. And Jo Minjoon was not an exception. When he got out of the interview after facing Martin like usual, he saw Chloe that was standing in the hall hitting the wall with her heel. As Jo Minjoon got close to her, Chloe turned her head.

“Did you finish?”

“What are you doing here?”

“Hm, it would be weird to go to the kitchen. The atmosphere is really down.”

“And Kaya?”

“Ugh. Looking that you are taking care of her, it really seems like you are siblings. Don’t worry. She’s in the interviewing room.”

“Okay.”

Jo Minjoon leaned his back in the wall standing next to Chloe. The cold of the concrete could be felt through his thin clothes. Chloe opened her mouth.

“I felt it today. That cooking in the kitchen of a restaurant and cooking in your home is different. I didn’t think that it would be this difficult.”

“Even so, it was entertaining. I had fun. Looking at the customers eating my dish happily. It was a first.”

“.....It’s the same for me. Even if I get disqualified in Grand Chef later on, I think that I would be able to protect my dream.”

Jo Minjoon nodded at those words. At first, he came all the way to the United States simply to get approved by his parents. Of course, he also wanted to stand in the stage he had admired.

But this competition gave him more than he had thought. Improving your cooking skills, and being surrounded by good chefs. And the most important point was that he could polish his attitude and passion towards cooking. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and opened his mouth.

“The competition, I think I came well. It was the best decision I have made in my life.”

“It’s the same for me.”

Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon and smiled brightly. And after that, the conversation stopped for a long while. They didn’t have particularly anything to talk about, and the silence was soft rather than being awkward. He thought that he didn’t need to say something to break the ice. But just like if there is a start, there is an end, there was also an end to that silence. Chloe opened her mouth.

“Now that I see, what are you going to do about telling your parents? You said that you were going to tell them. The dream of becoming a chef.”

“.....I have to tell them. Because I can’t just hide it from them forever regardless of the results. And on top of that.”

Jo Minjoon smiled.

“This mission, we won. I have to keep the promise.”

“.....I get the feeling that it’s not a promise.”

Chloe just scratched her cheeks.

The mission was won by the blue team, Kaya’s team. 17 to 26. The blue team was 26. The victory was so overwhelming it made them dumbfounded. Thinking about Peter’s mistake, they could

only think of it as something dramatic and a turn around. Jo Minjoon couldn't forget about the red team's faces that were half sure about victory.

“The victory, wasn't it because of your serving? They customers wouldn't have simply evaluated with just the dishes.”

“Nah, would they do that?”

Chloe laughed and shook her head. However Jo Minjoon didn't say that as simply a joke. Just like Emily evaluated, it wasn't weird to say that Chloe's smile captivated the customers hearts. Because the thing called service didn't simply end at simply serving your cooking in a plate.

“It's the truth. If it was me, when I ate something that was similar, I would have picked the team with prettier chefs.”

“Stop it. Stop saying crafty words and contact your parents. Ah, shouldn't you because of the time difference?”

“No. Right now, it should be morning.....”

Jo Minjoon hesitated for a moment and took out his handphone. It was at that moment when he turned on the turned off screen. Jo Minjoon's face froze. Chloe that looked at his expression looked at his handphone, and even she frowned. Although she couldn't know the korean contents, at least she could know the numbers and the missed call marks. 21 missed calls. Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon nervously.

“.....Wait a moment.”

When he checked the contents, 10 calls were from his mother, 5 from his father, and the remaining 6 from her sister Jo Ara. And he also had countless messages. Jo Minjoon looked at the ceiling for a moment, and looked down at his handphone again. Then let out a sigh.

[Mom : Minjoon, people are telling me weird things.]

[Mom : Did you go to a cooking competition?]

[Mom : If you see the messages call me.]

[Dad: Minjoon. Are you busy?]

[Jo Ara: Oppa, you said that you were travelling but what are you doing right now? Mom and dad are really serious right now.]

There were countless more messages, but it was difficult to read them. Jo Minjoon closed his handphone. Chloe extended her hand and firmly grabbed Jo Minjoon's shoulders. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth with a dark face.

“I think that they.....know.”



## Chapter 49: Unexpected Fame (6)

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“Know what?”

The one who replied wasn't Chloe, but Kaya. They didn't know when the interview had ended, but Kaya approached them and asked bluntly. Chloe glanced at Jo Minjoon. He pointed at his handphone and said.

“My parents called. It seems like they know that I came to this competition.”

“Huh? Did I mishear? Is that really serious?”

“It's not something serious, but things got messier. Because I still didn't tell them that I wanted to become a chef.”

At those words Kaya she rested her chin in her hands. She frowned for quite a while looking at the floor and opened her mouth as if she didn't understand.

“I don't get it at all. Not telling them is not telling them, and if they know, they know. Why, are they opposed to it?”

“Not until now. But if I tell them so, they will. And that's not the problem. Because regardless of what they say, I'm still planning to walk this path. What I'm worrying about are my parents. Because they will worry be distressed because their son dreams something beyond what he can reach.”

“They aren't even children, but aren't they being to harsh? It seems like they are overprotective.”

“It's good to avoid all the trouble you can. And it's also

tiresome.”

“Evading like that must be more tiresome. At least in my eyes, it seems stupid. Because only you end up having it difficult.”

At Kaya’s words he couldn’t reply back. Saying the truth, calling it stupid was also right. Maybe it was better to collide with his parents head on and beat them. However Jo Minjoon already had done so. That he liked cooking, that he could do it. He yelled like that and left his job. But what were the results? In the end, nobody could make their parents to feel assured. Everytime he saw his parents, he saw their worry and anxiety behind their smiles.

He didn’t want to repeat that. So he wanted to show them good results and at the same time convince them. That their son had this much talent, skills and potential. But it was too late for him to say something. Because getting to know through the internet, and listening to their son himself was two different things. Chloe patted his back and said.

“First, go and make them a call. You also make me worry right now.”

“Yeah. You go on ahead. I will go later.”

“.....Good luck.”

With Kaya’s transparent cheer, the two walked towards the kitchen. Jo Minjoon sat on a sofa that was on the side of the hall, and placed his handphone on his ear. Riiiiing, riiiiiiing. The tone stopped. But there were no voices. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth first under that silence.

“It’s me.”

[.....I have been watching your broadcast until now. Why didn’t you tell me? ]

“I’m sorry. I wanted to tell you after I achieved good results.”

[ These few months you have been cooking so suddenly.....Honestly, I can only say that it was unexpected. ]

“How did you know?”

[ News about you appeared. They weren’t big, but in small letters. ‘Jo Minjoon that is representing Korea in Grand Chef.’ was the title. Ara got surprised and told me, but honestly, I thought that it wasn’t you. I don’t know the reason why you had to hide it from us and go and participate in that competition.....Did we do something wrong? ]

“What wrong could you have done? Just.....I wanted to tell you after I got some results. Mom.”

Jo Minjoon gulped. His nervousness was felt even through his handphone. Jo Minjoon said in a determined voice and broke the ice.

“I am going to become a chef.”

It wasn’t that he wanted to become one, or was planning to. He was confirming it right now. That voice was filled with passion and affection towards cooking, so Lee Hyeseon couldn’t say anything.

Jo Minjoon didn’t prolong the talk. Because those words were the only things he had wanted to say. And Lee Hyeseon understood

that. Her voice rang through his phone. She seemed to be as calm as possible.

[ It's difficult for me to say something right now. Minjoon, you too should have thought about it a lot. I will also think along with you. The only thing I want to say is that..... Mom and Dad are always cheering for you. Of course, we are worrying for you as much as we are cheering. ]

“.....I know.”

[ The broadcast. I enjoyed it. Now that I think about it, I get the feeling that you practiced a lot without us noticing. Did you? ]

“Yes.”

He could only reply like that. Because it would be weird for him to have those skills without having practiced. Lee Hyeson continued.

[ What I can say right now..... Do well and come back. I'm sorry. ]

“Why are you sorry? Don't say those things.”

[ Do well. And don't get while cooking. And if you have already gone, just win it. Understand? ]

“.....Yes.”

His voice was held back. And Lee Hyeson also noticed that. She hurried and wrapped up the conversation.

[ Ah, thinking about it, I forgot that I had an appointment. I will hang up. Minjoon. You know that I love you right? Love you! ]

“Yes, me too.....”

Even before he could reply back, the call ended. Jo Minjoon bit his lips and looked at his handphone. Her reaction was a bit different to what he had thought. But of course, it was obvious that she was worried. However, Lee Hyeseon didn't think of his dream to be thoughtless. Maybe she would be thinking like that for herself, but at least she wasn't stopping him in his path.

Why could that be? But he didn't need to think long. Right. The results already showed. The results where he relieved his parents. But they got to sloppily know about it through a news. Saying that he was getting fame overseas and that he was focused on his dreams were just too heavy.

Jo Minjoon looked at the ceiling for a moment. It was different than before. His skills were such that he could relieve his parents. And thinking about that burnt his chest. Jo Minjoon lifted his head. Because if he didn't do so, he would be crying right now.

After calming down himself in the hallway, Jo Minjoon entered the kitchen. As he got to the 2nd floor, Chloe approached him as if she was waiting.

“Did you do well?”

“Yeah. Better than expected.”

“.....What a relief.”

Chloe was putting a more nervous face than Jo Minjoon. She calmed down and let out a sigh of relief. Looking at her acting like that made him feel grateful and moved him. He scratched the

narrow part of the nose and turned his head. The members of the red team were finishing the interview and getting in the kitchen.

Jo Minjoon made eye contact with Marco. Maybe if he wasn't black, his face would be frightened pale. It could clearly be seen that he was putting that kind of face.

It was understandable. Because the disqualifying missions were mixed with themes you couldn't just win with cooking skill. Kaya's and Jo Minjoon's tag mission demanded teamplay, and guessing the contents of the fried pocked also required an outstanding sense of taste.

What kind of mission would be? Jo Minjoon tried to remember. But he couldn't. He could only do so. Because what Jo Minjoon remembered were mostly missions related to Kaya. And in this mission, she wasn't included.

“Anderson seems rather calm.”

Chloe mumbled as if he was amazing. Just like she had said, Anderson didn't seem to be nervous at all. His confidence on being able to beat any kind of mission was shown on his face. Kaya grumbled and said.

“He's got a disdainful face.”

“.....Did you still not reconcile?”

“Aside from reconciling, I just don't like him.”

“I understand what you are trying to say.....”

Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly. She seemed to still hold a grudge because of the previous three course mission. Because she was the one who was in more danger for having prepared the appetizer.

“Shh, it’s started.”

Chloe lifted her finger. Just like she said, Joseph came and was raising his voice.

“We will start the disqualifying mission.”

—

The theme of this mission was omelette. And the standard of the evaluation was simple. To make a pretty omelette. It was simple but even the pro chefs found it difficult to do so. Because if you don’t usually make omelette, even if you were a pro, it was difficult to give it proper shape.

And they had to cook it in the same way. Using cooking oil and butter, and cooking beaten eggs without using milk or cream.

However, the difficult point in cooking omelette was right here. You needed quite a bit of experience to know when to stop cooking the egg when it starts to scramble, and to roll the scrambled egg little by little was also difficult to do. And the most difficult part was on the use of fire. If you put the fire a little stronger than necessary, the exterior won’t cook properly and get roasted. And

omelette didn't need the exterior to be seared.

And the things omelette demanded didn't end there. When you sliced omelette, the inside had to be soft. On top of that, you had to use the sides of the frying pan to give it a round shape. To take into account all of these things and make it in 5 minutes, made people pale when they were not used to make it.

There were no miracles. The people who were confident made omelette based on that attitude, and those who weren't made a mess. Anderson was the former. He kept a confident attitude from the start, and made a perfect omelette with no mistakes. His omelette that was yellow a little chick didn't have any mistakes to point out, and the exterior was made just like pudding. It was an omelette nobody could point the mistakes.

However Marco was the contrary. He had a nervous face since the start and in the end, made an omelette that was ripped in various places. At least the exterior was yellow, but in the end it couldn't be called a success.

Jo Minjoon looked seriously at him. It wouldn't be weird for him to get disqualified. Although the other participants weren't much better than him, they also didn't make it better than Marco.

And 5 minutes passed like that. Alan raised his voice.

“Everybody stop and bring your dishes.”



In front of the judges, there were 9 dishes placed in the countertop. Alan approached with a casual face, and pushed the dishes. But it wasn't that he pushed all of the dishes. It was only for the omelettes that were perfectly cooked and weren't ripped. And those omelettes numbered only 3.

Alan grabbed the knife and sliced the omelette. Two were softly made and the remaining one was lumped together like gyeran jjim. Alan let out a sigh.

“There are only 2 omelettes from 9 that are worthy to be called as omelettes. Who are the owners of these dishes?”

At Alan's question, Jacob and Anderson raised their hands. Joseph that was next to them opened his mouth.

“I get the feeling that you make omelette usually. I didn't have anything to point out. You two can go upstairs. You passed.”

“Thank you.”

The two of them replied in a low voice and moved. They couldn't jump out of joy for consideration of their previous teammates.

Emily looked at the remaining 7 omelettes. And then let out a sigh.

“To pick the worst three from these. It's hard. Can you do it? Honestly, it doesn't make me want to eat them. The only good point is that the exterior got cooked well. Excluding that the

seasoning feels a bit heavy, it is basically an omelette. However, if inside of the omelette is a raw egg or a sloppy jjim, I wouldn't be able to handle it. I think that it's profaning the egg."

For the person to be saying all of these things to be Emily, those were really harsh words. Because she was the type to normally say good things. Jo Minjoon bit his lips and looked at Marco. The one who was the kindest and gentle was Marco. He didn't want to see getting disqualified like this.

‘.....Marco, please.’

And his feelings weren't different to Chloe or Kaya. They received much consideration from Marco, and they knew well about his skills. For him to have made the best dish, but get disqualified for his team, was a really unfortunate thing. It was at that moment.

“Marco! If you pass I will present you a girl!”

Jo Minjoon let out a laugh and turned his head. It was Kaya. She opened her eyes sharply as if saying what was he looking at and said.

“But of course, it's not Chloe. Don't worry Chloe.”

“Ye, yeah.”

“.....Is there something to worry about meeting me?”

“Of course. Think about your big body.”

Marco's face sulked. Emily, that was looking at them, let out a sigh. Did she have to get angry at this or laugh? Alan who was blunt, also didn't know how to react at this.

Emily opened her mouth.

"Marco. Looking that you have the interest of the females, I'll announce first your dish. Your omelette is ripped all over the place. It's obviously not a good thing to look at. Do you agree?"

".....Yes."

"It's a relief that you do. Right. The appearance is certainly not good. Then, how well is it cooked?"

Emily sliced Marco's omelette with her fork. As soon as it split, the soft eggs inside of it flowed out. Emily smiled brightly. It didn't seem very different than Anderson's or Jacob's omelette.

"It's just like you see. It's perfectly cooked. It's not excessive, nor lacking. Even if you can't present it in a restaurant, it's good to eat it in your house. What would this mean?"

At those words, Marco said cautiously. He was rubbing his fingers.

"Uh.....Did I.....pass?"

"Wrong. The answer is 'lose fat'."

Emily replied bluntly. Marco's face became weird. He didn't

understand at all what Emily was trying to say. Looking at Marco being like that, Emily smiled.

“If you want to meet a woman you have to first lose fat.”

# Chapter 50: Crossroad (1)

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Chloe's parents were architects.

Her father used to say that just like house is inhabited by people, it needs to be harmonious with nature. Chloe couldn't know the meaning of it, but her father's face while saying those words were really cool to her. Because the job of architect was like a dream for her, when for other children it was really boring.

However, that dream didn't last long. Because the family she believed would last long, broke.

Even if her parents could harmonise the house and nature, they couldn't do so for wife and husband. Even after Chloe could graduate from primary school, the loud voices of them finally brought up the divorce documentation. The custody of the child was taken by her mother, Diana Jong, so Chloe Crook became Chloe Jong since then.

Diana was originally busy, but since then she got home really late. She didn't want her child to not live a normal life for being a child of a divorced family. That's why she let her do whatever she wanted like martial arts, horse riding, swimming, karate, etc. Maybe it could be something Diana wished for. That her child was living soundly, and that she wanted to believe in that.

However Diana couldn't do the most important thing for her. To be next to her. Of course, the word homemade food could only get unfamiliar to her. Diana's cooking skills were great, and she used

to cook with her on weekends. But it was difficult to take care of her even in week days.

The reason Chloe got to cook well was also because of that. The things Chloe wanted to make were just too much, and she didn't want to keep eating things to fill her belly like pizza or hamburger. At times she imitated, and at others she followed her mother's cooking method and soon her cooking skills improved just like Diana.

She had never dreamt of becoming a chef. Honestly speaking, it was hard to know if she wanted to become one right now. She just liked to cook. She participated in the competition with a light heart, and right now.....

“It's heavy.”

On the bed. Chloe was mumbling looking at the ceiling. In Chloe's head, many things passed by. Kaya, Jo Minjoon, Hugo, .....etc.

The common point those faces had was that they were filled with passion and determination towards cooking. Of course, Chloe too liked to cook. But if she was asked to bet all her life on it like them, she wouldn't be able to reply easily.

That night she couldn't get to fall asleep. Chloe wore her sports clothes and went outside. To take a stroll in a moonlight night. Aside from it being weird, it was a dangerous thing. Because you didn't know what kind of people roamed at night. That's why Chloe took a stroll only around Grand Chef's house.

‘.....It’s still a bit scary.’

The wind was cold, and her surroundings was really secluded. It was because of that. The moment she saw the man that was seating in a bench, her face became bright.

“Minjoon! You didn’t go to sleep?”

“Huh, what are you doing at this hour?”

“You are also outside at this hour.”

Jo Minjoon smiled and replied. Chloe slightly glanced at his handphone. On the screen that was shining brightly, many comments were written. But because it was in korean, she couldn’t read them.

“What are you looking at?”

“The comments.”

“If I see those I only feel bad, so I don’t like reading them.”

“I also don’t like them because they makes me feel bad.”

“Then why are you looking at them?”

“Because it’s human nature wanting to know the contents when someone curses you.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and shrugged his shoulders. Chloe let out a sigh.

“And you told that to Kaya? That it’s a waste of time and attention. You seemed like a teacher lecturing your student.”

“.....Kaya’s still young. She would find it difficult to take it.”

“And you are a grownup?”

At Chloe’s question Jo Minjoon replied with a smile. Chloe sat besides him and opened her mouth.

“I think that I’m still not a grownup. I’m too young.”

“What are you saying that so suddenly? Did the night make you susceptible?”

“Just because.”

Chloe smiled lightly. Jo Minjoon looked at her and then opened his mouth.

“You are troubled by something.”

“There’s nothing like that.”

“You aren’t troubled and you came out in this night? It’s already 12.”

“You are also outside.”

“But I am troubled.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and pointed his handphone with his finger. Chloe grabbed her forehead as if she had lost and continued saying.



“Yeah, good for you. I’m sorry. For not being troubled by a troublesome thing.”

“What is it about?”

Jo Minjoon asked again in a serious voice. Chloe pouted her mouth and embraced her knees. It was cold.

“Just so, other people are living hard working.....but it doesn’t seem to be the case for me.”

“You are working hard, so what’s the problem?”

“I’m not as passionate as you in cooking to cross the pacific ocean and come over here. Of course, it’s the thing I like the most.....and I’m liking it more and more, but I don’t think that I’m on the level to challenge it like you. Because I’m wondering if I can bet my life in cooking forever.”

“And what are you thinking to do if not cooking?”

“I want to become a detective. I’m a fan of Home’s.”

“Now that I see, you said that you were going to a law school.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Chloe as if he was surprised. Chloe wrapped her cheeks with both her hands. Or perhaps she was just cold. At that moment, Jo Minjoon thought about taking off his coat, but he didn’t. They weren’t in that kind of relationship. Jo Minjoon laughed and said.

“Having many abilities is also bothersome. Because you have many paths you can walk in.”

“What if I have many paths? Because the most important thing is how much you bet in it.”

“You have bet plenty already. There’s no need to get anxious.”

Chloe shook her head slowly.

What I’m troubled about is not that. Is if I can keep walking this path.”

“I like your cooking.”

Although he said it quite bluntly, it had quite a feeling to it. Jo Minjoon continued talking.

“I think that your character is shown in your dishes. It’s not excessive, it’s gently and consideration overflows in it. The bad thoughts can’t be seen in it at all.”

“Even if I don’t do bad things, I can be thinking about bad things. If you could look inside my head even you will be surprised.”

“It’s fine to think whatever you want in your head. The problem is if you show it or not with your actions. And the Chloe Jong I have seen until now is timid but has some interesting sides, and if people point out the bad things of someone you tend to find the good ones.”

“.....Hey, if you say it like that it’s rather embarrassing.”

“If you are like that, then would I be fine? If it was recorded for the broadcast I would be kicking my blankets forever. Ugh, I feel goosebumps.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and extended his fingers. Chloe just stared at him. Her short hair fluttered because of the wind.

“My troubles are getting dispersed. And they aren’t even getting solved.”

“Actually, there are no solutions regardless of what you listen to. In the end, you have to walk by yourself to know the answer. And if you hesitate.....”

Jo Minjoon put back his handphone on his pocket and got up. He pointed the strolling road and said.

“At least, I will walk this road with you.”

—

Oh hyunjun : It’s really interesting for a korean to appear in a foreign program. He’s not even a resident overseas, but only a korean.

└ □□○□ : What’s interesting in that? Godkorea here are many cases like that. That’s expanding in the world!

└ Lee Geoneun : @□□○□ Godkorea my balls. In the end, it’s that. They don’t have that kind of opportunities in Korea so they go overseas. No reply.

Kimbo: But he is having something with that white girl. If she was blond I would die from a stomachache.

└ Crow : You can dye your hair to become blond stupid. Tch tch

└ Kimbo : @Crow If you tan your skin do you become black?

Shin Saeyeon : After I saw that I got hungry. By the way Grand

Chef is really fun. It would be great if they come to Korea.

└ Hello : That's that but your profile picture is really pretty. Is that you.....?

JK KOO : Rather than those bluffs of a cooking it would be better to eat some fried chicken.

└ Nopeman : Nope

└ JK KOO : @Nopeman It's my opinion so why are you against it?

└ Nopeman : Nope

Wardo : It is, delicious ! I see ! A lewd weed. Help !

Kim Yeongchan : It would be fun if he wins it. A foreign guy would be taking all of the reward.

└ Lee Joohee : But if he wins there, won't he nail down? If he gets prestigious over there he won't have the need to come back to Korea.

└ Kim Yeongchan : @Lee Joohee You don't know about it. He may come back missing his hometown. But even if I see it, it would be better for him if he stays there.

└ Nopeman : @Kim Yeongchan Nope.

Kimchipepperman : It would be great if Kaya and Jo Minjoon end up together.

Jo Minjoon stopped looking at the screen. Contrary of his worries, the reactions in Korea were quite good, and there were

many people who mentioned about other things than himself. Honestly, he felt it to be regretful that the attention he received was low, but it was a rather good thing. Because he thought that the more attention you were given, there would be more bad things than good ones.

“Are they koreans?”

Kaya that was glancing at times asked in a low voice. Jo Minjoon nodded. Kaya asked once again cautiously.

“Is there any word of me?”

“Not much.”

Actually, she had a lot. However it was all related to Jo Minjoon. It was a bit embarrassing to say that in front of her. She put on a relieved face. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly and asked.

“Are you that worried?”

“There’s no one who likes being cursed.”

“Then act a little softer while on the broadcast. Then, half of the anti’s would disappear.”

“Enough. That wouldn’t be me then.”

“If you talk like that I have nothing else to say.”

Jo Minjoon turned off his screen and lifted his head. Kitchen. The participants were all gathered. But it wasn’t that they were gathered to eat as usual. Because the mission was soon going to

start.

The progression of the missions didn't have a fixed period. At times in 2 days, and in others, it was in 7 days. The judges and the directors had to set the schedule so it was unavoidable, but even so, waiting without a schedule was always a bothersome thing.

That's why the faces of the participants that were waiting for the judges to enter were a bit unburdened. Hugo that was next to him asked Jo Minjoon with a nervous face.

"What do you think the mission will be?"

"I wonder. I think that all of the normal themes already got out. Wouldn't this be individual cooking? And they decide the cooking method and the ingredients for us."

"I would like to do something like Texas barbecue."

"You have to check on it for 24 hours straight. You want to do that?"

"That's also true."

Hugo admitted it clearly and shrugged his shoulders. At that moment. The door behind the kitchen started to slowly open. The participants gulped and looked at that. But something was different. There was a different point than usual. And it was the number of the judges. Precisely speaking, Joseph and Alan weren't there. The one coming in was only Emily.

Emily coughed while standing on the stage and fixed her voice. The participants looked at her filled with curiousness and Emily

smiled in a good manner.

“Hello everyone. Even though I saw you in a long while, it doesn’t seem that long.”

Emily looked at each of the participants and slowly smiled at them. When she looked at Jo Minjoon, she smiled even more brightly. But Jo Minjoon ignored her. After she had asked him to become an epicurean, between them an awkward air was felt. It could be said that they felt uncomfortable between each other. But of course, in the first place they didn’t even talk with each other.

“Today, you will have to choose between Alan and Joseph. I tell you beforehand but this isn’t a team mission. So when you choose do it more seriously. You don’t have to worry about who messes up the most. I tell you once again, this isn’t a team mission.”

The moment he heard Emily’s words, he could vaguely know the identity of the mission. He wondered if the participants they picked would vary according to the dish they chose beforehand, being one they liked and made well. And actually he did faintly remember seeing that mission.

“You will know the details after you choose. The ones who want to pick Alan go to the garden, and the ones for Joseph stay in this very place. I will give you exactly 1 minute.”

The participants didn’t say a word and started to calculate in their heads. What kind of mission could it be? What side would be better to choose?

And then, 1 minute passed. Emily shouted.

“Choose!”

Jo Minjoon moved his feet.



## Chapter 51: Crossroad (2)

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There was no need to hesitate. The moment he was given the two choices, Jo Minjoon had already decided.

Alan and Joseph were chefs with completely opposite nature. Joseph was basically a chef that took a serious importance in orthodox cooking, and Alan was a chef that favored originality.

But it wasn't that one side was better or worse than the other. Only, he got the feeling that if he went to Joseph, he would consider more the skills than the recipe. So it was better to go to the side where he could save the recipe's ability the most. Because Jo Minjoon's best strength was the recipe designing of his system.

Jo Minjoon glanced at his sides. There were seven others that were leaving the kitchen along with him. Kaya, Anderson, Hugo, Carlos, etc. Chloe and Marco still remained in the kitchen.

The unexpected one was Anderson. Because Anderson's cooking and character was uptight and tenacious. Orthodox cooking suited him more rather than a challenging one. Jo Minjoon thought like that.

When he looked at Anderson while thinking like that, he didn't stop his feet and frowned.

“What? Why?”

“Nothing.”

“.....What is it? Don’t make me curious and just spill it.”

“It’s really nothing much. I just found it interesting for you to have chosen Alan instead of Joseph.”

“And why is that interesting?”

“Just so. You usually cook orthodoxly.”

Anderson smiled and replied.

“If you can make an orthodox dish, you can make any.”

“Right. Good for you.”

Jo Minjoon shook his head as if he was tired of him. Anderson frowned while looking at Jo Minjoon acting like that, but didn’t say anything. Kaya that was looking at them clicked her tongue and said.

“Are you kids?”

“.....I feel really weird listening to that from you.”

Because the most childish and spoiled one was her. She said with a blunt face.

“I’m still a teen. It’s an age I don’t need to act like a grown up.”

“Now that you say it like that, I get convinced.”

Jo Minjoon nodded and smiled.

Grand Chef's garden was the size of a considerable stadium. Jo Minjoon moved his step with a more nervous face. Was his decision good? He didn't know. Not until he had experienced it.

Alan was standing below a thick willow. In front of him was placed a table, and on top of it was a plate that was covered by a lid. Every time the wind blew and shook the branches, the sunlight made the shadow appear and disappear over Alan like a current of water. Rather than being romantic, it looked like a video that was playing in a screen with its pixels broken.

"There are seven of you? There are more than I had expected. I thought that you wouldn't come for not liking me."

Alan said with a voice you couldn't know if it was a joke or he was saying it seriously. Jo Minjoon and of course, the participants looked at him with an awkward face. This was the time you could say that a strange distance was felt. Could it be said that his own words was deep, or he was in a 4D? Alan opened his mouth.

"What did you think would be the mission for you to come to me? Hugo. Answer me."

"Uh.....To copy the signature menu of the chef, or for the chef to treat us to a dish he likes. I think that it will be one of the two."

"Well, if I have to pick one side, it would be closer to the latter."

Alan talked like that and looked at them meaningfully. He slowly opened his mouth.

“I will ask you a question before announcing the theme of this mission. I will give you a last chance to go to Joseph. You aren’t going to change?”

The participants just looked between themselves absentmindedly, but there seemed to be no one to have changed their decision. Because, there was no meaning in changing even before you got to know what the mission was. Alan nodded.

“Good. Then, I will tell you the contents of the mission.”

Alan talked like that and opened the lid of the plate. And at that moment, a laugh was heard. And it came from Jo Minjoon. He looked at the contents of the plate hopelessly. It seemed to be made with loyalty to the basics rather than being fancy. He could see the sleek white rice grains and the aroma that was felt was the smell of cheese along with the faint aroma of onion and leek.

Risotto. Koreans tend to think that it’s an italian bokkeumbap, but actually, it was closer porridge than rice. In Italy this dish was treated as primo piatto along with pasta or ravioli. In parties, it was common for it to replace pasta, but normally, it was a dish that was eaten in a normal family meal.

In Italy it was a dish that was as familiar and received as much love as pasta and pizza. Suddenly, Jo Minjoon became dubious. Was Alan italian? Honestly speaking, he didn’t care much about him, so he didn’t know his birthplace. But fortunately, his doubt got resolved immediately. Alan served a spoonful of risotto in the seven dishes and said.

“I was born in Italy. It’s obvious for pasta, and I also ate risotto as an everyday meal. That’s why I can evaluate the flavor more accurately. You have to make a risotto taking into account the normal cooking method, and at the same time, satisfy my mouth. You can use whatever ingredient you want. Just, don’t forget what a risotto is.”

Alan said in a strict voice. Jo Minjoon looked slightly at the faces of the other participants. Three seemed really confident, and the other three did not. Anderson and Hugo were the ones who were confident. By the way, there was a time where Hugo made the italian dish ossobuco in a perfect way.

And when Jo Minjoon asked him the secret to it, there wasn’t anything particular. Experience. His italian grandmother made him many italian dishes since small, and he said that he had made it several times. And he had also said that ossobuco was one of his specialties, so it being 8 points convinced him.

‘If you group together cooking level and experience, a dish beyond your expectations comes.....’

Honestly saying, he was envious. Jo Minjoon couldn’t eat well made dishes since small because of his mother’s sloppy cooking skills. Lee Hyeseon’s food was always salty or needed seasoning, and there were many times where the cooking wasn’t done properly.

The problem Jo Minjoon had was right that. That his cooking

didn't have a foundation. He looked in the internet or broadcast and copied the recipe of the dishes that seemed delicious. He wasn't limited by boundaries, and the result of that was that he became able to cook all kinds of dishes. However it couldn't be said that those dishes were his own. Because the food didn't have a color of Jo Minjoon, but was transparent and faint.

He was troubled by it but he couldn't do anything about it. The experience he had accumulated through his life, no, it was a problem of identity rather than experience.

It was at that moment. Alan looked at Jo Minjoon and said.

“Minjoon. You have showed us your absolute taste before. Can you guess all of the ingredients for this risotto?”

He didn't expect that. But he understood. Because to just let that ability go to waste in a broadcast was really not a good thing to do. Jo Minjoon ate a bite of the risotto and slowly opened his mouth.

“The shallots and the onions are mixed on a 1-1 ratio. There is chopped garlic and the rice is arborio. Because it is an italian dish, it would be good to use italian rice. It's obvious but there is salt, and also dry white wine.”

Jo Minjoon took the breath he was holding in. The participants were looking at him with an unknowable face. Jo Minjoon continued saying.

“There’s parmegiano and reggiano cheese in it. There’s a little bit of pepper for seasoning, it’s obvious for olive oil, and the gravy is a clam gravy. This seems to be everything?”

“.....Correct.”

Alan looked at him with a face he couldn’t get accustomed to. At times, there were outstanding epicureans that got all of the ingredients like Jo Minjoon. However, even they couldn’t say those ingredients with absolute confidence. He differentiated the shallot and the onions? Those were ingredients you wouldn’t know how to distinguish between them if you didn’t know that they were included in the dish. Although if you ate knowing about it, it would be different. Weren’t normal people not able to discern between coke and soda?

So he could only be expectant to Jo Minjoon’s dish. A picture drawn by a colorblind and a normal person, and one drawn by someone who can see beyond colour could only be different. Basically, it was because the world they saw was different. And he thought that Jo Minjoon’s tasting world was different. He believed it to be like that. That if Jo Minjoon completed a flavor by his own, that flavor would be so luxurious and delicate as to not be able to compare it with anyone.

The participant’s sights became shameful. They knew that Jo Minjoon had a genius like sense of taste, but that sight was one which they just couldn’t get accustomed to. Anderson frowned and tried to feel all of the ingredients Jo Minjoon had named. But it was difficult. The flavor that was mixed time and time lost almost all of its original shape.

‘How can he read all of those flavors like that?’

Aside from talent, he was envious. He got the feeling that Jo Minjoon’s tasting world was more beautiful and happy world than theirs. But of course, in reality it was a bit different.

“Okay. Now that the little event has ended we will go again with the main point. If you look at the ingredients Minjoon had named, there are no special ingredients in it. They are basic and normal ingredients. But that flavor is..... it’s a bit embarrassing to say it by myself, but I believe that you were satisfied by it.”

The participants nodded. Alan’s risotto was so delicious it made them forget that they were in the middle of a mission. Alan continued speaking.

“The only I want to give is this. That a risotto must be like one. Don’t put in your excessive greed. And if you keep all of that, I believe that an excellent risotto would appear.”

“.....Risotto.”

Kaya mumbled in a low voice. Her voice that seemed like she was angry was telling that she was nervous right now. Because it was her character to erect her spikes when she got nervous.

Even at first glance, Kaya was putting on a face that told that she didn’t have much experience. And it was the same for Carlos. Their faces were so pale to the point that he felt bad for them.



‘Am I making the same face right now?’

Jo Minjoon extended his hands and groped his face. But of course, there was no way he could know what kind of face he was putting right now. Alan opened his mouth.

“One of you, and one of the participants that followed Joseph will disqualify. But of course, if your dishes are so perfect to the point I can’t disqualify you, today could become a day with no disqualifiers. I would also like for that day to come. Now, let’s move.”

Taking into account that they had moved all the way to the garden, it was a really sloppy announcement of the mission. But of course, they would be shown through the screen like they were really nervous.....

“Can you make risotto well?”

At the unexpected voice, Jo Minjoon turned his head. It was Kaya. Jo Minjoon shook his head and said.

“Honestly, it’s not my specialty. But I will have to work hard.”

“It seems like you don’t have any specialties.”

“.....Now that I think like that, it does seem like that.”

At her words, he let out a laugh as if he was a little relieved from the nervousness. But he seemed to be embarrassed to have laughed like that and forced himself to not laugh and said.

“Even so, your food is delicious.”

“.....Was it?”

“Yes. It is.”

“Oh, wait. Let’s stop. They will edit us once again.”

After she said that, she glared at the cameraman that was following from behind. As the cameraman laughed without noise and with a flustered face, she said while grumbling.

“You only get these things, right?”

The cameraman didn’t reply. She wasn’t expecting an answer, so she turned back with a cold face to look at Jo Minjoon. The cameraman grinned. Can that little lady know that her attitude is more charming in the screen?

## Chapter 52: Crossroad (3)

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When they got back to the kitchen, it had the same awkward atmosphere as the garden. It could only be like that regardless of the mission. Because if it wasn't a mission which they were proficient in like steak, it was difficult for them.

However, Joseph's theme had an easier point compared to Alan's.

"You are paella?"

Jo Minjoon asked with a hopeless face. Chloe nodded and replied.

"Yes. I was also surprised. I never thought that a spanish dish would appear."

After she talked like that, she let out a sigh. However Jo Minjoon was rather envious of her. Because at least, you could make paella without cheese.

He did make risotto at times, but it didn't suit it that well. Maybe because it was a dish that was basically mixed with cheese. It wasn't that he didn't like it. He couldn't digest it well. Didn't he get a stomachache right before the preliminaries eating risotto?

Even if he could make an edible risotto, he wasn't confident in making a perfect one.

Because he couldn't even cook risotto al dente. Excluding

expensive restaurants, they all served disastrous risottos. Maybe, it could be to suit their tastes, but the rice grains were usually fully cooked and crushed.

Because he had lived eating those kinds of risottos, he couldn't get a model example of risotto. Even so, the reason he didn't feel despair was because he had the strength of the system. Because when he was designing the recipe, if there was an awkward point, it would be seen through the estimated score.

The time to design the recipe was 10 minutes. Jo Minjoon designed the recipe many times in his head. He put in sea mussel, bacon, and thought of many things that could go well with risotto.

But it wasn't easy. They were mostly 5 points, and the ones he thought was good were only 6 points.

'Am I not doing the designing correctly? Or the score also takes into account how much I know about risotto.....'

He felt frustrated. Because in the meantime he was thinking like that, the time was still flowing.

But Jo Minjoon wasn't the only one to be troubled about designing the menu. Kaya, and Carlos were the same. Kaya didn't eat a risotto like risotto in her whole life. Precisely speaking, there was only once. Alan's risotto she had tried just now.

Kaya just looked at the empty table in front of her. Actually, she was drawing the picture of herself making risotto in that place. She combined different ingredients, but she could only think of

one recipe that was good enough. Only.....

“Bring the ingredients! You have to complete your dish in 1 hour!”

There wasn't more time be thinking. Jo Minjoon moved his step. It wasn't a perfect recipe, but he was attracted to one. It was a risotto made by using Italy's representing ham, prosciutto, and a ripe pear.

The cheese he was going to use was the parmigiano and reggiano Alan had used. The meaning of the name was simple. Cheese from the region of Parma. This cheese originated in Italy, Parma, was better known as parmesan cheese in Korea. But were two completely different things. Parmesan cheese was a combination of parmigiano, reggiano and other things. Saying that the two of them were the same was like saying that pure gold was the same as mixed steel.

And the rice was also the same as Alan's. Arborio rice. It was the most suitable rice when making risotto. This kind of rice was short in length, so the rice grains were hard and had great elasticity. It could be said that this ingredient had great synergy when combined with other ingredients.

And the pear was bosc pear. The korean pear had a round shape like hallabong, and compared to to it, bosc pear was more crunchy and had more sugar. That's why Jo Minjoon wished for Korea to produce only bosc pear. Because it was that delicious.

Originally, if he had to check the ripeness of the fruit, he had to press the end part of the stem, and it took quite a while to do so. But Jo Minjoon didn't have the need to do so. Because the system was telling him everything.

[Bosc pear]

Freshness: 94%

Origins: California

Quality: High

That was the best Jo Minjoon could pick right now. Because even if it was immediately delivered, comparing to being acquired at that place, the freshness could comparatively fall.

Jo Minjoon's eyes moved quickly over the pears. He looked at over 20 windows and picked two bosc pears, and then he picked the shallots and fresh sages. This herb that was also known as salvia was really strong.

Saffron was also an attractive choice, but honestly speaking he wasn't confident in handling it perfectly. Because saffron was a really hard to handle herb. To use it in a non accustomed to make dish like risotto, he couldn't help but hesitate.

After he walked past the vegetable corner, Jo Minjoon rolled his eyes in front of the place that contained the hams. Prosciutto ham. Prosciutto was also one of the products originating of Parma, just like parmigiano and reggiano. It was a ham made by drying sauced meat, and the special point was that it didn't need to be smoked.

Just like you used dry aging method to dry the meat so the nutrients condense and the aroma intensifies instead of using the wet aging method, it was the same for prosciutto. But the point that wasn't comparable to dry aging is that prosciutto's maturing time was more than years.

In the case of prosciutto, it was sealed in a plastic pack, so the quality was consistent. Jo Minjoon grabbed a prosciutto without hesitation and kept walking.

Chicken gravy, butter, dry white wine, and pepper was all of the ingredients he needed. He didn't need salt. He was planning to make the seasoning with just cheese.

Jo Minjoon was one of those that didn't take long picking an ingredient. Because the others had to check the quality of the ingredients one by one. Jo Min Joon was the first to have finished picking his ingredients. He heated a small sauce pan in mid fire and the judges approached him. Joseph asked.

"You picked fresh ingredients well. What kind of risotto are you planning to make?"

"It's a risotto made with pear, prosciutto and sage."

"The sage's aroma is strong, and it's also the same for prosciutto. Will you be able to make it as to those ingredients don't clash against each other?"

"I'm planning to use the least amount of sage possible. If the dish is done as I'm thinking it to be, at least, it won't be thrown in the trash bin."

The judges looked at him with envious eyes without saying anything. Jo Minjoon didn't mind and concentrated on cooking. The estimated cooking score was 6. Although the recipe was good, it also meant that it lacked something. Actually, risotto was that kind of dish. Because rather than the recipe, the chef's hands could make a difference of heaven and earth. If you were a beginner, it was a dish which you would fail 100 times out of 100.

And that's why Jo Minjoon could concentrate harder than ever. Jo Minjoon poured olive oil and heated it sufficiently. He couldn't let it smoke. Because that meant that the oil was burning. When it started to have a shiny gloss, it meant that it was already heated.

Jo Minjoon sliced the prosciutto thinly and placed it on the oil along with four leaves of sage. After waiting for it to become crispy, he had to take them out with a sieve and place it over kitchen towel to take off the oil.

The next was the gravy. Jo Minjoon poured the chicken gravy in a mid sized saucepan and turned on the fire. It was a must to use an appropriate fire strength.

Be brought the gravy on fire and Jo Minjoon placed the shallots and the prosciutto on a cutting board. It wasn't the prosciutto he had fried just then, but a new one. He chopped the same amount of prosciutto he had fried along with shallots, and he just had to fry it in the low heated frying pan.

Before the shallots turned brown from frying, there were many



things he had to do in those 1 to 2 minutes. First, he had to take out the sage leaves for a bit, and had to peel the pear to chop it the size of a dice. As he was handling the pear and looking around, the onions were already finished cooking. Jo Minjoon's hands fastened. And that was the reason. A voice was heard.

“Minjoon! Look at your hands! Hands!”

It was Emily. Jo Minjoon checked his surroundings dumbfoundedly. And only then did he notice that his left thumb had quite a deep wound. Jo Minjoon raised his left arm. The medical crew quickly approached him and disinfected and sprayed hemostatic medicine in his thumb. Emily asked with a worried face.

“Can you continue?”

“I will.”

Jo Minjoon replied briefly and chopped the remaining pear with his other hand and put it on the frying pan. Pear, rice, and a teaspoon of sage. It wasn't frying but just coating it in oil while shaking the pan, and the next was the wine. After the treatment ended, he put on a rubber glove, and he poured half a cup of dry wine in the frying pan. His hand burned, but Jo Minjoon was too concentrated to bother about that.

He raised the fire of the pan that had the mixed ingredients, and Jo Minjoon just waited for the wine to boil down in the rice grains. And only then could he notice Emily that was still looking at him concerned. But she wasn't the only one. He didn't know when he

had come, but Alan also approached him and was looking at his hands. Precisely speaking, at his left hand. Jo Minjoon looked down at his hand. Now that he was conscious of it, a hot and painful feeling made him frown.

Alan and Emily could not tell him to stop and get a proper treatment. Because they knew really that for Jo Minjoon, and all the other participants, this place had a deep meaning. Jo Minjoon composed himself and said.

“I’m okay. There’s no need for you to be concerned.”

“.....As soon as the mission ends, get proper treatment.”

Alan said in a blunt voice and turned his back. Emily too let a sigh and went to another table. Jo Minjoon bit his lips. The pain was getting worse, but it wasn’t the time to be crying.

‘The thumb.....moving it is a bit difficult.’

Because of the pain, he couldn’t feel it well. However he was already done with the knife. The inconvenience wasn’t that big of a problem.

When the wine was almost boiled down in the rice, Jo Minjoon poured about half a cup of the boiling chicken gravy on the rice. When it boiled down, another cup. It boils down and another cup.

And like that, 10 or 15 minutes passed and the rice grains were slowly becoming more sticky. And that was the time to put in the

remaining pear. Jo Minjoon peeled off the pear, chopped it just like before and then put it on the pan. The pear slowly started to lose shape under the hot gravy and then disappeared.

Jo Minjoon repeated tasting it. He felt the roundness of the rice grains, and also felt the faint aroma inside it. He couldn't exactly know what al dente meant, but he tried his best to give it flavor. It was through the taste his system couldn't do, but his tongue could.

It was hard. The rice's flavor, pear's flavor, wine's flavor, gravy's flavor, sage's flavor. Feeling all of these flavors at the same time was a really difficult thing to do. However, Jo Minjoon was in a state of concentration like never before. It was an unfamiliar dish. And because of that, he had to evaluate it more perfectly.

Jo Minjoon soon forgot about the pain in his thumb. He just felt the flavors. Flavor, aroma, texture. The only thing he was seeing right now was the risotto, and he was only listening to the rice grains exploding in his mouth. Jo Minjoon put all of his concentration in his tongue. No, precisely speaking he wasn't concentrated in his tongue. Cooking. Jo Minjoon was immersed in cooking. No, the cooking embraced him.

Even before he used all of the gravy, Jo Minjoon confirmed that the rice grains were completed. They were inflated like a balloon, and when he chewed the insides of it, his teeth felt the softness. The aroma of the wine and chicken gravy; and the aroma of the sage and prosciutto tickled his nose like an elaborated puzzle.

Jo Minjoon turned off the fire, and started to cool the risotto. After a minute passed, he put in the melted butter, cheese and

pepper to do the seasoning. It was completed.

‘The estimated score was 6?’

Jo Minjoon bit his lips and stared at the risotto. The system was his strength. In the end, it didn't decide his limits. An excellent risotto. Although he had never eaten a proper risotto, in the end it was still food. A delicious one. And Jo Minjoon knew how to give it flavor. Just like Alan had said, he knew what cooking was. Although he didn't have the absolute sense of taste they thought he had..... Jo Minjoon believed in his talent and passion for cooking.

There's a saying that those who believe in themselves have no impossible things. At times, he thought that that verse was too idealistic and simple, but now he got the feeling he had comprehended those words.

And that comprehension and trust, compensated him.

[You made a risotto that's over your limits with a surprising concentration!]

[The ingredients have perfectly harmonised themselves. The rice you made is taking all of that flavor!]

[The mastery of Italian cuisine cooking has risen!]

Jo Minjoon's eyes shook. He looked at the last window with those shaking eyes.

[Pear risotto]

Freshness: 95%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Origins: High

Cooking score: 8/10

## Chapter 53: Crossroad (4)

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8 points. Jo Minjoon looked at that score dumbfoundedly for a long while. He didn't believe it. He thought that it was difficult to do so until now. And it wasn't that he had made a dish you were familiar with like Hugo. He wasn't familiar to, and didn't even like risotto. He got 8 points with that risotto.

It would be a weird thing if that situation made him only happy. Of course, his heart felt like exploding for the score he had received for the first time in his life, but at the same time, he felt dubious. How in the world could he get 8 points? Was concentration alone enough to do that?

“Well, everybody take your hands off.”

Even before he could organize his thoughts Joseph yelled. Of course, there was no one to have failed in completing their dish after 1 hour. Because 1 hour was enough to make risotto and paella.

As he slowly checked at his surroundings, his eyes fell on Kaya's dish. He couldn't help it. Because he knew that she was showing a not confident attitude. But because of that, he couldn't help but wonder. Cooking score 8. He understood that. But.....

‘Shallots and onions on a 1-1 ratio, parmigiano and reggiano, clam gravy, dry white wine..... This is exactly the same as Alan's.’

The dish Alan had served them just then was copied exactly the same in front of Kaya. Did she originally cook it like this? He didn't

remember well.

Looking that it was 8 points means that she was successful in bringing out the same flavor. But can she get through the creativity?

‘Is not a problem that can get solved for me to worry about.’

Jo Minjoon looked away. He had made an 8 points dish for the first time in his life. It could be a selfish thing to say, but he wanted to enjoy this miracle to his heart’s contents instead of worrying of something that didn’t even happen.

The first one’s the judges evaluated were Carlos and Marco. Both of them weren’t able to make outstanding dishes. Because Carlos and Marco were 6 points. Jo Minjoon quickly looked at the dishes of all of the participants. And there was only one 5 points dish. Coney. From the remaining participants, she was the only one around her forties, and was also the most silent participant. What she had made was paella with corns and onion, but honestly even at first glance, it didn’t seem that delicious.

He thought that the one to disqualify would be Coney, if there were no upsets. However, it was uncertain for the risotto team. 7 points for Anderson and Hugo. Kaya was 8 points. And the remaining three were all 6 points. You wouldn’t know who of those three would disqualify. Alan ate a bite of Carlos’s risotto and rinsed his mouth with water. Then opened his mouth.

“Carlos. What’s the theme of this risotto?”

“I saved the aroma with basil and pine nuts.....”

“No, I can see that clearly. But why am I chewing more pine nuts than rice grains? The seasoning is good. And it’s the same for the recipe. But the oil of the pine nut is covering all of the flavor. Have you tried it?”

“No, I just.....Didn’t have the leisure to.”

“Are you saying that you made risotto without even trying it? You, do you know that much about risotto?”

Carlos lowered his head. And the evaluations that continued from Joseph and Emily weren’t that different. It was averagely good, but the problem was that the pine nuts covered the risotto’s flavor. In the end, Carlos became a disqualifying candidate and went back to his countertop.

And Marco also received a bad evaluation. He made paella that was fried with lemon juice along with a hard baguette, shrimps and saffron. However the fish gravy was weak and was a bit burnt, so in the end he also got to the disqualifying candidates.

After that was Kaya and Coney. The moment the judges looked at Coney’s paella, they showed hesitation, but couldn’t help but to lift their spoon and eat a bite. And then frowned. Emily let out a deep sigh and said.

“You are aware that it is overcooked right?”

“.....Yes.”

“There are a lot of things that are lacking for it to be called paella. The rice grains are damp like cheese, and because of that, I get the feeling that the flavor of the other ingredients are also



sloppy. Coney. Right now, you are the most convincing disqualifying candidate.”

After that was Kaya. After Alan ate a bite of Kaya’s risotto, he said with a casual voice.

“Before when you were preparing to cook, I asked you. If you were planning to imitate my dish. Actually, I said that half joking but you really did so.”

“.....I told you before, that the risotto I ate before was the only time I have tried it.”

“If you say it like that, I feel sorry for telling you something, but even so I need to say what I have to. Didn’t you think about reforming a little bit of the basics of my dish?”

“Are you able to run before walking?”

That was the most indirect way Kaya could say. Joseph just chewed Kaya’s risotto without saying anything, and said with a soft voice as usual.

“Just like Alan had said, maybe it lacks creativity. Because it’s the same as copying another person’s dish. Alan should have thought that copying his recipe was the best you could make. Is that right?”

“I already told you. That walking is my utmost.”

“You are right. Alan. I think like that. That it’s a bad thing for a chef to test a customer with creativity that isn’t even theirs.”

Emily nodded and said.

“Actually, how many participants could there be that had used their own recipes. In the first place, this isn’t even that kind of program. You aren’t cooking what the others had already cooked, but the theme is to cook a delicious thing. I agree on the point that she had made the best she could. Of course, her lack of understanding towards risotto can be a diminutive point, but at least, it seems that she had done her best in her own environment.”

Alan didn’t refute the words of the two. Because he thought that there was some truth behind their words. The judges sent eye signals between themselves. Alan nodded and opened his mouth.

“Kaya. We think that we want to keep watching your cooking. It’s a bit disappointing that in today’s dish, there wasn’t a trace of your color but it was still good. You have expressed it completely like I had thought. You pass.”

“.....Thank you.”

Kaya turned back with a not happy nor disappointed face. And after that, it was the turn of Jo Minjoon. Precisely speaking, Jo Minjoon and Chloe’s turn. Jo Minjoon glanced at her dish. Sea mussel and shrimp was appropriately placed on top of the sea mussel’s shell so it seemed all the more luxurious. But of course, peeling off sea mussel was realistically more burdensome to do.

7 points. It wasn’t a bad score. At least, she could survive today. After he thought like that, his head got filled to the evaluation he was going to hear. It was his best work in all his life. So it was obvious for him to be expecting what kind of evaluation he would

receive.

The first one to be evaluated was Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon couldn't help smiling little by little. Alan glanced at the dish and opened his mouth.

“You said that you weren't familiar to risotto, do you think that you had made it well?”

“Yes. I affirm it more than any time.”

Those confident words made Alan momentarily flinch. Alan raised his head and looked at Jo Minjoon. A voice was heard. Not from Alan, but from Emily.

“Minjoon. Last time you said that you had a scoring system. Was that called cooking score? So, what kind of score would you put to your dish? If you are confident, maybe a 7?”

There were rumours in Grand Chef's house that Jo Minjoon scored a dish, and that he had said that his best was making a 7 points dish. Looking at Jo Minjoon's confidence there was nothing wrong to say that his dish was a 7 point. But the weird thing was after that. Jo Minjoon replied while smiling brightly.

“No. 8 points.”

“.....8 points? Didn't you say that it was difficult with your current strength?”

“I wonder. Maybe the word miracle is used at times like this.”

Jo Minjoon's words were better than usual, it wasn't with the meaning to use as broadcast material. The judges, the participants and the casting crew that were looking at him all felt that. Joseph put the risotto in his mouth as if he couldn't take it more. He closed his eyes trying to feel the grains of rice one by one and soon, the same smile as Jo Minjoon was seen in his face.

"I understand those words."

The happiness contained in those short words were really dense. Alan and Emily hurried to lift their spoon and ate the risotto. And at that moment, they could understand Joseph's words.

Pear risotto. Actually, it wasn't a special recipe. The combination of prosciutto and pear was used by commoners a lot, and using sage leaves wasn't all that special either. Because it was a herb used frequently in risotto.

However, the depth of the flavor wasn't ordinary. Because even if it was the same recipe, according to the amount of dedication you put in and invest time and effort, the flavor would get different. Cooking was about that. Cooking didn't betray the time invested. Luxurious dishes taking a long time to make wasn't a coincidence either.

And from Jo Minjoon's pear risotto, that dedication and time was felt clearly. The ingredients were exquisitely harmonious with each other, as if trying to not ruin the flavor even a little, and through the teeth the texture of rice grains that were chewed and the flavor of the gravy and wine were perfect beyond asking.

Alan opened his mouth. It was a voice filled with satisfaction.

“How did you make this kind of risotto? Minjoon. This risotto kind of risotto shouldn’t be able to be made by someone who doesn’t know about risotto. Just say about seasoning, because that’s entirely up to tasting. Someone like you should be able to catch that easily. However, it isn’t for the rice. It shouldn’t be easy to boil down the gravy this exquisitely.....”

“I won’t entirely say that it was all because of my skills. I’m thinking that I was really lucky back then.”

But just because of that, it didn’t change the fact that it was a good dish. Even if it was by coincidence, they felt good for having seen his potential. Joseph nodded and said.

“Miracle comes to those who are ready for it. Minjoon. It’s your luck and skills. Congratulations. If it’s 8 points it means that it’s the first time you have climbed your wall. The wall you have climbed once, will be easier to do so the other times.”

“Thank you. I would like it if it’s like that.”

Jo Minjoon smiled and replied. Alan slightly glanced at the other judges. However, there was no need to ask them their opinions. Jo Minjoon had already said that his dish was 8 points. And the judges agreed to that. It was the best this he had made so far. Alan opened his mouth.

“Minjoon. People are focused about your tasting right now. I also was like that. However, an excellent chef is not always an excellent

epicurean. Even if you didn't have that sense of taste of yours, you should have still made an excellent dish. Because you are a person that can pour all of the attention in one risotto. That concentration will become your weapon."

"I agree fully with Alan. Minjoon. If you place this risotto in any restaurant, it would never get a complaint. You are calling this moment to be a miracle, but if you keep working like this I believe that your everyday will be filled with these kinds of miracles. I ate well."

Emily continued to say after Alan. She was putting on a really big smile, maybe because of the risotto she had ate. Alan coughed and opened his mouth.

"Go and treat your hand first, Minjoon."

".....Did I pass?"

"The answer is on the plate."

Alan lifted his finger and pointed the plate. Risotto, no, the plate that contained the risotto. It was a really clean one.

## Chapter 54: Crossroad (4)

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While he was getting treated, Chloe's evaluation was proceeding. There were no upsets. Although there weren't compliments, there also weren't critics.

Looking at the face of Chloe that was returning, Jo Minjoon frowned. But of course, it wasn't because of the results of her evaluation. His pain was getting worse. The doctor applied an anesthesia through a syringe and said in a blunt voice.

"As time passes, your sense will awaken, and the pain will get worse."

".....How long will it take to heal?"

"It's different to each person, but normally it will take around 1 week for the scar to close. And in 2 weeks, it will completely heal. It will take even longer for the sensation of your finger to completely come back."

The doctor talked like that and sewed his thumb with a thread. There were five stitches. The injury on a hand for a chef was no different than a company for life, but even so, looking at the needle sewing through his flesh, he felt somewhat uncomfortable.

"Don't look. It's not good for your mental health."

As he turned his head to look at the judges because of what the doctor had said, Hugo was getting his evaluation last. 7 points. It was the same with the ossobuco, but he thought that Hugo was a relatively skillful chef. He thought that if he went on like this, he

would reach level 7 in cooking in a few years.

“Thanks for your good cooking.”

With Emily’s last words, the evaluation ended. The judges glanced at Jo Minjoon. The final conclusion had to be done when all the participants were gathered. The doctor tapped Jo Minjoon’s wrist and said that the treatment was done. As he went back to his countertop, Joseph opened his mouth.

“We have decided the first place for today’s mission as the results of sharing our opinions. First, I’ll tell you what kind of dish got first place. Risotto. It is risotto.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon licked his lips and looked at the judges. There were only 8 points dishes today. Him and Kaya. However in the case of Kaya, she received a critic about her creativity, while he didn’t get any. So of course, he could only expect to it.

Joseph looked at Jo Minjoon. He raised his hand and made a gesture as to get closer.

“Minjoon. Congratulations. You are today’s protagonist!”

He couldn’t control his expression. The smile made his lips to raise, and he tried his best to shut his mouth. However, that result ended in being a bright smile. It was the first time. 8 points, and being first. He had always tried his best to survive, but there



wasn't a day where he became the best. However it was just like Joseph had said. He was today's protagonist.

Joseph continued speaking.

“Get some confidence. Minjoon. Regardless of that absolute sense taste you are already an excellent chef. If you improve your risotto a bit, it can even be presented on my restaurant's table. It was that kind of dish.”

“In my opinion, it seems that you have always doubted about your own skills. Saying that the best you could make was a 7 points dish is proof of that. Why are you thinking like that? Think about the risotto you made. Didn't you say it yourself? That it was an 8 points dish. Stop doubting in yourself.”

After Joseph talked, Alan's words made Jo Minjoon not able to reply back. He couldn't just say that because the system said that his cooking level was 6, he could only make a 7 points dish at best. It wasn't because he had to keep it a secret. Whatever it was, in the end it was evident that Jo Minjoon had surpassed his own limits.

He felt that his felt his throat choke and that something was surging up. That was resentment, happiness, sadness surging through his throat and made him want to shed tears. He planned to not cry until he had won, but he raised his hands to cover his eyes. Beyond his palms, a voice was heard.

“Cook like today. I believe that you being the best won't end today. Because the twenties is a good age to grow.”

“.....Thank you.”

His voice was wet. Although it would be seen good in the screen, Jo Minjoon was rather embarrassed of his own voice. He felt that he wasn't manly or old enough. But it just couldn't be helped. Because the dream he had always wanted approached right in front of him and was saying that he could get it..... If in that kind of situation, you didn't get a surge of emotions there were two reasons for it. That the dream was a fake one in the first place, or he had never felt moved.

As he stopped shedding tears and moved away his hands, in his cloudy sight, Alan was also looking at him with a moved expression. Jo Minjoon tried to make up a smile and bent down to the judges. It was a korean salute, but even so, he wanted to express himself.

As the announcement of the first place ended, after that came what made everyone bothered. The announcement of the disqualifiers. Even the judges couldn't get used to that moment. Alan said with a hard voice.

“We ate many dishes today. In the case of risotto, we had our opinions collide a little, but in the case of paella the disqualifiers were too clear to see. Carlos. Coney. Come to the front.”

Carlos walked to the front with a pale face. Coney had a calm face as if she had already expected it. Alan said in a cold voice.

“Coney. You have made the most terrible dish until now. Did you know that?”

“Yes.....I do.”

“However, it doesn’t mean that you are also a terrible chef. I have eaten well the dishes you have prepared until now. The dream to become a chef, I wish you don’t give up. You have potential. Just keep going like this.”

“.....Yes.”

Coney replied as she nodded. After that, was the turn of Carlos. Carlos was nervous because of the soon to reach announcement and was tensing his muscles. The tattoos on his arm wriggled, but it just seemed like a weak cat with it’s fur erected. Emily opened her mouth.

“Actually, we have thought a lot picking you. Saying the truth, there were many participants who had made risotto in your level.”

“... ..”

“However, a disqualifier had to appear. And from those, we picked the chef we got the least amount of impression. I’m sorry, Carlos. It seems that you are done until here. Coney, Carlos. Leave your Grand Chef badges and leave please.”

Carlos and Coney pulled out the badges with their hands trembling. They left the badges in the table they had just cooked until now, and they could only leave the kitchen with strengthless steps. Jo Minjoon bit his lips and looked at Carlos’s back.

He couldn’t say that they were close, but it was the first time a participant he was rather close to and had shared conversations with to disqualify. They cooked together for the same dream, but in front of the crossroad they had to separate.

Actually, this competition could be called as a constant crossroad. Because every time the broadcast ended, at least one participant disqualified. If in the start you felt a strong feeling to survive, now it was at the point you had to compete with each other without yielding.

It was bitter. So much that the sweet taste of victory dispersed.

As the interview with Martin ended and night approached, the participants were gathered in the hall as usual. It was time for the broadcast to start.

Although there were two disqualifiers, it wasn't right for them to keep being sad. Because even if they weren't in this program any more, it didn't mean that their dreams were ruined. Jo Minjoon massaged Hugo's shoulders strongly. Hugo got surprised and looked back at him.

"You would be feeling lonely for your best friend to have disappeared."

".....Whew, I don't know."

Hugo let out a sigh as he shook his head. Just as much as he was close to Carlos, regret was as big as that.

The broadcast started. Just like irony, the first one to appear in the screen was Coney. She was looking at the camera with resolute eyes.

I'm an unmarried mother. My kid just became four and is going to kindergarten. And I'm in debt not being able to even pay the kindergarten. The talent I have? No. I don't know if I'm able to call this as talent. It's my last rope. I'm doing it because I like? I wonder. Honestly saying, I feel more pressured than feeling fun in cooking. Because it's my last hope. Because of a stable life of my child and I.....I can't fall here. I will win. Surely. I'm not as knowledgeable about cooking like the other participants, and I have just learned through going to all kinds of kitchens..... But my reason to win is clearer than all of them.

It was a heavy content. The people that tried to keep a bright attitude were sulking. If you were a normal viewer, you would cheer looking at that scene, but they already knew. That Coney had disqualified.

‘That bastard of paella.’

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. Honestly speaking, even if Coney got through this mission, there was no way she could win. Because there was a basic difference in skills. But even so, he couldn't stop feeling bad for her.

The broadcast was about the three course. Jo Minjoon could look at that situation in detail for the first time. Precisely speaking, it was Anderson's and Kaya's fight. They, who were arguing about who was going to be the main, in the end, a mosaic was put in Kaya's hand and then ended. Joanne hit Anderson's arm and said.

“Do you want to beat a kid?”

“.....Shut up.”

“You two are similar, similar.”

At her words, Kaya that was far away, frowned and glared at her. Joanne raised both of her hands as if she was surrendering.

And after that, it was just as they had known. No, there was one thing he didn't notice. And that was that the other teammate of Kaya and Anderson was Carlos. Anderson's team disqualified and in the losers revival phase, Kaya asked for help to Jo Minjoon and then the commercials came. Now, the participants didn't bother them about their love line. Because they have already teased them sufficiently. Although it would be different for the viewers.

“You won't be able to sleep tonight too checking the comments.”

Hugo smiled and said that. Jo Minjoon looked at him and asked.

“You don't check it?”

“I read a little. Even if I read it, there's nothing I can say. And there isn't much about me. Because I haven't been put in a love line from the director like certain someone.”

“.....Be thankful that you weren't. Because this is really stressful.”

“And why do you get stressed?”

It wasn't Hugo who had asked the question. Jo Minjoon turned his head. Kaya was looking at him with a puzzled expression.

“You also check the comments because you get stressed. Isn’t it?”

“I do get stressed but not because of that. If you get grouped with me it’s an honor, why is that stress?”

“.....You shouldn’t get between a married couple’s fight. I’m out.”

“Enough. Sit. What couple are you saying?”

Jo Minjoon made Hugo, that was about to leave, to sit. Hugo glanced a little and whispered lowly in Jo Minjoon’s ear.

“I’m afraid of her.”

“Nowadays teens are all like that.”

“I don’t think I was like that.”

“You were a teen a long time ago. How old were you? 28?”

“Kuuk.....”

Hugo put a depressed face and dropped his head. At the sight of them playing by themselves, Kaya wanted to say something more, but in the end she didn’t. The broadcast was starting again.

It was about their personal stories. They showed the story of every participant and told the reason why they couldn’t disqualify, and it was also the same in case of Kaya.

I’m not planning to return to that kind of a sewer. Well, the other participants should have similar reasons. A reason to not disqualify. But, I’m sorry but it’s unavoidable. Because I also have a reason. I’m going to win even if I have to kill them all.

It was really extreme, but nobody blamed her. Because they now knew well about her character. But of course, it would be different for the viewers.

He glanced at Kaya and saw that she was putting a quite serious face. It was at that moment. It seemed that Carlos was also at the disqualifiers revival phase, but they showed him cooking and on top of that, his voice covered it.

Actually, in the past, I used to do drugs. And the way to get out of that was through cooking. It's the truth. I'm not saying it for the emotional parts, but I really only had cooking. The only thing I could concentrate and have fun. Aside from drugs..... I only had cooking. Perhaps, cooking could have been a drug for me. And I'm planning to win everything with this drug like cooking. Reality, and prohibition syndrome. All of it.

Voices were heard among the participants. Nobody knew that Carlos used to do drugs. And it seemed to be the same for Hugo, because he had quite a serious face. Jo Minjoon patted Hugo's shoulder lightly.

"It's going to be fine. Although he got eliminated, cooking didn't leave him."

".....It will, right?"

"It will. He was a good guy. Let's believe in him."

Hugo laughed bitterly and looked again at the screen. The broadcast continued running and soon was announcing the disqualifiers and the winners. Looking at the Grand Chef's logo widening and filling the screen, Jo Minjoon felt the broadcast to be



too cruel.

This broadcast's victory was a sweeter mistake than anything else. However, this mistake was only allowed to one person. Aside from that person, all the remaining ones will end up in a failure. The disqualification and trials of the participants would give the viewers a stirring emotion that amounted to only a tear, but for the concerned party, they embraced them a suffering that made them feel about to crumble.

What would be in the end of that crossroad?

Cheers? Or.....

# Chapter 55: Travelling, Cooking And Business (1)

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As he looked outside the window, many sceneries flowed slowly. Inside the shaking bus. Jo Minjoon stared at the horizon absentmindedly. Now that he thought about it, it was impossible to experience looking at the horizon with his own eyes in Korea. Because the word horizon didn't really suit with Korea. The only place you could properly see the horizon in Korea was [gimje](#)(김제). But of course, he had never travelled to the south to just look at that.

“What's there to look that you are looking like that?”

“It's different to look at the horizon in Korea.”

“What? Why?”

“There are many buildings and many mountains. No, you are just unable to look because of the many mountains.”

Anderson was putting a face as if he didn't understand. Jo Minjoon shook his hands and said.

“People from big countries like you wouldn't be able to understand.”

“I didn't particularly say that I wanted to.”

Anderson grumbled and turned his head. Hugo that was seated behind them smiled and said.

“Do you fight every time you meet?”

“This isn’t called fighting.”

“I wonder. In my eyes, it seems like it.”

Looking at him smiling seemed like even if they told him something, he was still going to say what he wanted to. Jo Minjoon didn’t reply and looked again outside the window. It wasn’t even a grassland, but the wild. And this wilderness was so vast it made you feel fresh.

The reason they got in the bus like this was simple. After the mission of the risotto and paella ended and after two days passed, Martin summoned them. There was only one sentence he had said. “We will move to the next mission place.” Many questions poured at him, but there was no reply.

So of course, the bus could only be filled with curiousness and frustration. Kaya grumbled while playing tetris in her handphone.

“Martin needs to suffer once to wake up. We hide his salary envelope in a secret place of his house and when he asks where it is we reply ‘It’s that place you think it is’.”

“It’s good. But nowadays, they don’t give you in cash. They deposit it directly to your bankbook.”

“Then we just have to hide his bankbook and cards. Enjoying hide and seek with Martin. Just like that.”

Everyone laughed. Marco laughed awkwardly and opened his mouth.

“But really, where could we be going to?”

“Looking at the past season, they did things like distributing food to all the soldiers.”

There was also that time when they sailed to the sea. And cooked with the fish they had caught.”

Jo Minjoon just smiled without saying anything. He remembered well where they were heading to. Because it was that fun of an episode. If it wasn't different to the original, the place they were heading to..... He opened his mouth.

“It's a bit boring to just go like this, wanna bet?”

“Bet? How?”

“We each bet the place we think we are going to, and the one's who gets it wrong must pay the price to the one who won. Washing the dishes, or making food. If not, a temporary errand coupon would also be good.”

“Ah, then let's do it like this. The person who gets it right becomes king for a whole day. And if that person orders it we have to listen to him or her. How about it?”

“That's fine.”

At Hugo's words, Jo Minjoon nodded. Hugo looked at his surroundings seeming to be having more fun.

“Who wants to participate? No. Who doesn't want to?”

There were only two people who had raised their hands. Anderson, and Kaya. Hugo opened his mouth regretting it a little.

“Hey, you are the ones we want to make you work the hardest, so how can you get out?”

“It’s just like you said. If I lose, it seems like you are going to drain everything out of me.”

“You just need to win.”

Kaya raised her finger without saying anything. Of course, it wasn’t the thumb. Nor the index, ring or pinky finger. Hugo put on an astringent face and looked back at Anderson.

“Anderson. Why aren’t you playing?”

“Don’t bother me and play among yourselves. I’m going to sleep.”

Anderson just closed his eyes as if he didn’t even want to reply anymore. Hugo let out a sigh and turned his head. And he looked at the other participants and said.

“Okay. Where do you think we are going to? I’m betting in the army.”

“The hotel.”

“Hotel seems fine. Hotel for me too.”

“Restaurant for me.”

“..... A family’s house?”

Aside from them, many guesses poured. Hugo wrote the names and the places on his handphone. And he glanced at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“Minjoon. Where?”

“Rent Car.”

“.....What? What are you saying so suddenly?”

Hugo looked at him as if it was absurd. Rent car and cooking. It was a combination that didn't suit each other at all. Even if he looked at him as if he wanted to purposefully make it funnier, Jo Minjoon was just smiling brightly. Hugo frowned and said.

“There's no backing down later.”

—

“.....This crazy.”

Hugo looked in front and said absentmindedly. The thing that welcomed them when they got down of the bus was a signboard that said 'Rent car. We will become your feet.' Hugo turned his head as if he couldn't believe it. Martin was getting down in a mid size jeep car. Hugo asked.

“Rent car? Are we maybe making the food for the employees here?”

“Maybe. Wait a moment. You will soon see the mission.”

It was at that moment when Martin ended talking. From the parking lot, a loud sound rang and soon, three cars entered. Those were trucks. Foodtrucks. Only then could Hugo understand the relation of rent car and cooking. Jo Minjoon laughed and held Hugo's shoulder.

“When should we do the king thing?”

“.....Did you expect this?”

“If I didn't, there was no way I replied as rent car.”

“Are you extraordinary or do you bet real money.....”

Hugo said with a strengthless voice. It was at that moment. The people that were getting down the food trucks were all familiar people. They were the judges. Jo Minjoon let out a laugh and looked at them. Emily sighed as if she was a bit nervous.

“It's really difficult driving a truck.”

“You drived well, Emily.”

“Don't make fun of me.”

Emily shook her head with a worn out face at Alan's words. Alan smirked and looked at the participants. He opened his mouth.

“Actually, showing you this much you should be able to know the theme of this mission. Yes. This is a food truck mission.”

Jo Minjoon looked at the truck with a smile. It was a size 15

people seemed able to get in. Actually, Jo Minjoon had a desire about this kind of mission. Precisely speaking, he wanted to feel getting in a food truck to travel everywhere and use the ingredients to feed the residents from all the places.

With that kind of meaning, Jo Minjoon felt this mission to be a reward for him. However, the real reward hadn't started yet. Joseph looked at Jo Minjoon and said.

“There are three trucks. So of course, there will be three teams. And the team leaders would also be three. And one of the team leaders shall be the person who got first place in the last mission. Minjoon! Come to the front!”

At the unexpected act, Jo Minjoon walked to the front with a confused face. To be a team leader. He couldn't even imagine that the day he would have that role would come. He could only get perplexed. Joseph continued speaking.

“There are currently 13 survivors. It's a number that can't be divided exactly by three. So naturally, there will be a team with 5 people in it. And Minjoon, that will be your team.”

“.....Is that a good thing?”

“Normally it would. Because you would get one hand, no, two more hands.”

Joseph talked like that and laughed. And then looked at the participants.



“And I will pick two more team leaders among you. It’s not only the last mission, but they are the people who had showed to be the most suitable to be team leader. Chloe. Hugo! Come to the front.”

Chloe and Hugo walked hurriedly to the front with a surprised face. Looking at their blushed cheeks for being nervous, Emily said in a teasing manner.

“You aren’t blushing because you are angry, right?”

“Yes? Yes! Of course.”

Chloe got surprised and shook her hands. Alan said in a calm voice.

“After you make your teams, you will have to make business traveling the zone for one week. You are free to choose what you will sell. The evaluation is simple. I will compare the ranking of you guys. To the team that got first place, they will be given a coupon to eat in a luxurious restaurant, and to the last place team, a disqualifying mission will be given. There are no rewards or punishments to the second place.”

“One week.....”

Everyone mumbled with an absent minded voice. It was longer than they had thought. However, it wasn’t that bad. They thought that they would be having fun for one whole week. But of course, their bodies would get exhausted. Because when you did something you liked, even if your body found it hard it couldn’t fight back.

“The basic funds will be supplied by us. It’s your choice to sell good ingredients expensive, or use cheap ingredients to sell it cheap. Then, let’s make the teams. Minjoon. I will give you the right to choose first. Who will you pick? By the way, they can’t deny you.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon slowly looked at the participants. There were three that got his attention. Kaya, Anderson and Marco. First, Jo Minjoon excluded Marco. His baking skills were certainly outstanding, but the combination with food truck wasn’t that good. Because he couldn’t be baking bread inside the truck.

The remaining ones were Kaya and Anderson. Actually, he would be picking Kaya based on his feelings. Because he was her fan, and was close to her. On the other hand, he and Anderson were always quarreling. They weren’t in bad terms but it couldn’t be said that they were in good terms either.

However, there were two uncertain things to just pick by skill. First, the temperament. For the temperament, he thought that the both of them wouldn’t be able to treat the customers well. No, maybe Kaya would be better off. Because she grew up in the market. She wouldn’t be frowning next to her mother while she was selling fruit.

In the case of Anderson, compared to Kaya, the good point he had was the vast knowledge about luxurious cooking. Especially, in the case of culture, Anderson was many times higher than Kaya. On the other hand, Kaya had learned many things thanks to jumping through the boundaries. Perhaps, she was similar to Jo Minjoon in that aspect.

In that moment, he remembered Kaya calling his name in the previous mission. However, this wasn't the time to be shaken by friendship.

“.....Anderson. Let's go together.”

There was no better participant than Anderson in this kind of mission, where you didn't know the direction it would go to. Because wherever you placed him, he could complete his role without any problems. On top of that, he didn't really like the fact that people were thinking that they were dating.

Anderson nodded without saying anything and stood in front of him. Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at Kaya, but turned his head because he flinched. Kaya was putting on a really scary face right now.

The next was Chloe. She didn't hesitate even a moment and opened her mouth.

“Kaya. Please come.”

And Hugo picked Marco. After each of them named three teammates, the remaining one was Peter that just like irony he had caused trouble in the last mission. After that, people tended to consider him as a participant without skills. Peter went to Jo Minjoon with an awkward face. As the last member, the only place he could go to was Jo Minjoon's team that was possible to form a 5 man team.

And the teams conformed like that. Jo Minjoon's team was like this. Jo Minjoon, Anderson, Ivana, Joanne, and Peter. Alan clapped and opened his mouth.

“Good. You will have to get along like this for 1 week. The fees you use in the middle will all be up to you. It will be important to calculate the sales amount and the travelling distance.”

“The customers and place. You have to grasp all of that. The only thing I tell you is that you are forbidden to do business in the same place for more than two days. Keep roaming. It's your work to design food that will suit the location.

Joseph added. Listening to that, Jo Minjoon felt that this was a rather difficult mission. Because you had to do business, and not only cook. There were more things to think than usual.

And the one who was responsible of it all was the team leader. At that moment, he felt that reality more clearly.

## Chapter 56: Travelling, Cooking And Business (2)

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The judges didn't waste more time and left the place. Jo Minjoon laughed lightly and looked at his teammates. She made eye contact with Kaya tha wasn't on his team, but as soon as they saw each other she turned her head. Was she angry? Anderson that followed Jo Minjoon's sight asked as if he was teasing him.

“Why? Do you regret it?”

“No, it's not that i'm regretting it. I just feel a chill down my spine.”

“Then why did you pick me? So not like you. Just make your love line as usual.”

“I picked you because I also didn't like that. Because we would get more tired the more they see us together.”

“You are talking like you have nothing going on between you.”

“Because we don't.”

Jo Minjoon said with a blunt face. It was a voice that didn't even have a trace of hesitation and also made him flinch.

‘Was it really not it?’

Honestly speaking, Anderson thought that the broadcast wasn't entirely made up. Although he didn't see it personally, the relationship they had seemed to be quite deep. It felt too excessive to just call her a friend.

But despite that, Jo Minjoon's attitude was too clean. Joanne that was next to them laughed and said.

"If he says so then it should. Anderson, don't ask too much. This is not something to be solved with the people around them overthinking things."

"Because you make us seem like that, it became like this. And also for the broadcast."

"It's turned around, Minjoon. It didn't become like this because of us, but because you act like that we react like we do."

Jo Minjoon thought about what he should reply and then changed subjects.

"Let's talk about that awkward loveline you say later, and first lets look the truck."

As he talked like that and moved his steps first, his teammates grinned and followed his back.

The food truck was as wide as it appeared to be from the outside. Jo Minjoon looked the inside of the truck feeling flustered as if he was someone who had moved away. It was in a state where there were no cooking tools yet. Because tell couldn't put in the tools before even knowing what you were going to cook.

Jo Minjoon said while sitting in a chair that was on the side of a wall.

“It’s wider than I have thought.”

“It has to be this much to be able to cook or do something. So, what should we make?”

“I wonder..... Sandwich? Is it too ordinary?”

“It’s a good choice being ordinary. But we have to think about the theme of the mission. In the end, we have to do business that makes the most money. I think that it would be somewhat lacking with just sandwich.”

At Anderson’s pointing, Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts without saying anything. First, there were two paths. Cheap and a lot, or expensive and a little. But thinking that people that come to the food truck aren’t expecting a luxurious meal, he thought that it would be better to go with the former one.

“Let’s go with the not expensive one. I think that 5 dollars would be good. And we have to go with just one thing.”

Based on what he remembered, the team that had won was Anderson’s. But he also thought that it was Kaya’s. Because they were on the same team. And the menu.....

‘Was it spanish omelette? No, it seemed to be another thing.....’

Even though it was a program that rehashed a lot, he couldn’t help but remember the team missions in a cloudy way. Because, what he remembered was basically the menu’s that had a story behind them.

Actually, it wasn't right to act based on the future. Because the teams were different from then. Now he had to design a menu according to the teammates he was with.

It was at that moment. Peter, that was aware of his surroundings, opened his mouth casually.

“What about steak?”

“If you are talking about cow, it would be difficult. The costs doesn't match. Because there aren't going to be people that would want to pay tens of dollars to eat.”

“Wouldn't using chicken breast be okay? Accompanying along with salad.”

“It's not bad..... But it's a bit lacking.”

Jo Minjoon kept touching his chin that wasn't even bearded. Joanne snorted with a hm noise and opened her mouth.

“First, what gets into your mind when you think about food trucks? Kebab, takoyaki, hot dog, hamburger, sandwich.....”

“Mmm. There's also chicken and pizza. But honestly, I think that these two won't have much competition. Because you can ask for pizza to deliver it to you. And I don't think that they would have a reason to go and look for a food truck.”

“So do we have to pick from the options I said? There aren't more?”

“Let's think a bit more.”



There was no need to decide it immediately. Because that day was given as preparations, and the business started the day after.

Ivanna that was absentminded and her mouth shut opened her mouth. She, who had short brown curly hair and freckles, talked so little it made you wonder if she was a mute.

“Shaved ice. Gelato. I like them.”

“It’s April. In the east, winter’s climate didn’t pass yet. It’s still early for the people to want to eat something cold.”

“Even if it’s cold, ice cream is still delicious.”

“Although it is delicious, it’s a bit burdensome. I think that it would be better to evade cold food.”

Ivanna put again an absentminded face and looked down at the floor. Anderson said.

“Ice cream would be difficult just like you say, but I think that there should be a drink accompanied with the food. A non alcoholic cocktail or squeezed fresh juice, or even tea would be okay.”

“Depending on the food, the drink would also change.”

It was at that moment. Jo Minjoon thought of one food in his head. A really familiar one for him, but a strange for them. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth after hesitating a bit.

“How about kimbap?”

“Kimbap? What’s that?”

“Mmm..... You place rice on top of laver, and also place other ingredients and roll it.”

“Oh. Isn’t that sushi? If you order sushi in a japanese restaurant, you see them a lot.”

“Yes. That. Norimaki. If you take out vinegar and sugar in that and apply some sesame oil, you can look at it as kimbap. It’s almost the same.”

He felt somewhat regretful that they didn’t know about kimbap, but nothing could be done. Because it was to the point that he seemed it funny that they couldn’t even distinguish about kimbap and sushi. Jo Minjoon thought for a little and continued speaking.

“Norimaki. On the side of the costs, I think that there would be nothing better than it. What do you think? Joanne. Do you know what this is?”

“Yes. I ate it quite a bit because I like japanese cuisine very much. Hm. It’s simple and easy to sell, I think that it’s not a bad idea. You can also make it beforehand, and it’s an unfamiliar flavor. I don’t know if the people will feel it to be unfamiliar, but nowadays there is no one who didn’t try sushi. What about you?”

Joanne looked at Ivanna. Ivanna rolled her eyes slowly and then nodded.

“I think it’s going to be fine.”

“.....You know what kind of food it is, right?”

“Yes. My friend is japanese.”

“Peter, what about you?”

“I haven’t tried it. I don’t like fish that much.”

“This isn’t sushi that contains fish. It’s made with rice, laver and other ingredients. Hm. It’s really fine for me. Because it’s easy to sell after you have prepared it.”

Jo Minjoon nodded. The biggest advantage of kimbap and sushi was that it didn’t matter if it got cold. Because after preparing it for a bit, there was no way to act without control when the customers flocked. With just that, half of the disadvantages seemed to be solved. Anderson opened his mouth.

“So the main idea is already made?”

“Yes. We will have to think about the tea to serve it with. Lemon tea, citron tea, green tea, black tea..... It would be good if we prepare at least three kinds of teas and make the customers choose.”

“We will have to go to the market for the recipe.”

“Well, lets.”

Jo Minjoon turned his head. He looked at the empty space in the truck.

“First, let’s choose the cookware.”

—

[Kaya: Traitor. Ruin yourself.]

Night. While he was cleaning the cookware and checking them, a message came. Jo Minjoon laughed and looked at the screen. While he was thinking what to reply for her to feel angrier, he seemed that he was being too childish and felt delighted in vain. Joanne laughed wickedly.

“You are messaging again?”

“Don’t say again. It’s the first time I received one. Look. Is it still the problem of our actions? You are making it look like that.”

“I woouoonder. Just messaging is a dubious situation. Look. We aren’t messaging with the other teams right now. And it’s the same for you. Did you message someone else that’s not Kaya?”

“.....No, it isn’t even that kind of message. Look, screen. ‘Traitor. Ruin yourself.’ There’s no romance at all?”

“Romance is seen differently by each person. In my eyes, it looks like you are midway.”

Joanne put a detestable face and just clapped with her palms while her wrists were stuck. Jo Minjoon shook his head as if he was exhausted.

“Just finish cleaning the fryer. There’s dirt in it. Do you want to keep idling around?”

“You just act strictly in these kind of situations. I won’t even be able to tease you because you are afraid!”

“.....You talk like teasing me is an obvious right?”

“Hmph, leave it.”

Joanne turned her head while pouting her lips and cleaned the fryer more harshly. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and was turning his head. An “Ah.” along with silence was heard. It was Peter. He was looking down at his hands while frowning. Jo Minjoon put back his scrubbing brush and hurriedly went to Peter.

“What is it, Peter. Are you hurt?”

“.....No. Just a little bit.”

“Give me your hand.”

Peter let out a sigh and extended his hand. Jo Minjoon’s face became serious. The injury in his palm was quite deep. It wasn’t as deep as the injury in Jo Minjoon’s thumb, but it was three times longer than it.

“Hey, it’s not just a bit. What are you doing without going to the doctor quickly. No. I will bring him.”

“Wa, wait.....”

After we ignored him, he hurriedly went to the steps and looked for a doctor. The doctor looked at Jo Minjoon with a dumbfounded face.

“Why are you looking for me? Did the injury open?”

“No. It’s not me, but my teammate that got hurt. It’s a knife cut.”

“Oh my..... Understood. Wait a little.”

The doctor hurriedly brought the medical tools. As he went to Peter, he was holding his wrist strongly as if trying to control the hemorrhage. However, his palm was already full of blood. While the doctor was treating him, Peter kept looking dispiritedly at the floor. Jo Minjoon felt rather bad looking at his face. He didn't seem to be simply putting that face because of the injury.

After Peter got his hand treated and was resting, the checking of the cookingware finished. Jo Minjoon looked outside the truck. And he saw Peter seated absentmindedly. Even though he sat next to him, he didn't look back at him. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth because he was feeling frustrated.

“Why are you this dispirited?”

“.....What are you talking about?”

“Even listening to your voice you are buried deep in the earth. If by chance it's because of what happened that time, don't mind it. Because I don't. It's something that passed. You can make some mistakes while cooking.”

“I'm not like this because of that.”

“Even if it is or not, in the end you admitted it. That you are dispirited right now.”

Peter bit his lips. Just like the majority of indians, he also had a stubborn face. So he rather detested his face that wasn't saying anything. Jo Minjoon grabbed his forehead and said.

“What is it. I need to know your problem for being your team leader. Are you really not planning to talk?”

“Just.....”

Peter opened his mouth, but closed it again. He let out a sigh with an exhausted face, and kept his mouth shut for a long while. And then, opened his mouth and said with a suffering voice.

“I’m thinking about what am I doing right now right here. If the scene where Kaya and I fight gets broadcasted I would become a bastard and will get thousands of ill comments. And there would not be any restaurant that’s going to recruit that kind of chef. And most of all..... I don’t have the confidence to be able to do something here. It’s not only here, but wherever I go. Because i’m a guy that only knows how to make trouble just like that day.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t say anything. It wasn’t that he didn’t feel sympathy for him. Nor wasn’t frustrated. In the first place, he didn’t have that deep of a relation with him. However, for him to talk about what he was feeling to someone he wasn’t close to meant that he was suffering a lot right now.

That’s why he said.

“Even if I console you right now, those words would just be for this kind of situation. Those words wouldn’t even be meant for you, and because I want to become a good person. If you want to hear to these words, I can tell them to you. Do you want to?”

“.....If you talk like that, would there be someone that says that he wants to?”

“I asked because I knew you wouldn’t want. I don’t want to console you. And i’m not thinking to. Ah, don’t misunderstand. Because i’m not particularly thinking bad about you. I don’t know

about Kaya, but I ended everything that day with what I said.”

Jo Minjoon took a breath for a moment. The sun was setting. His face was red similar to the sunset. Maybe because he was reflected to it, or his pressure was up.

“I like cooking. And because I do, I came all the way here. I want to take my first step properly in this world. That’s why right now i’m happier than ever. But what about you? You also came. It means that you liked cooking. But why are you leaving a once in a time opportunity and talking about confidence or ill comments? Ah, right. I understand. Image, it would get bad. Because Martin isn’t the kind of person to edit that. But if you were going to worry about that, in the first place, you shouldn’t have committed that accident.”

“I didn’t do it because I wanted to. I..... I, yeah. I don’t have a social life. Because of my temperament, I got bullied in school, and there was no one I could call as friend. It’s the same here. I’m a loner. Every I have met didn’t like me. And now, through the TV all the people around the world got to know of me. And they will also hate me. Do you get it? Not only the americans, but the whole world will hate me!”

“What about that?”

Jo Minjoon talked while twitching his eyes. Peter glared at him as if he was angry, but he only bit his lips. Jo Minjoon continued talking with a sharp voice.

“What if they hate you? Just because they hate you, do you want to live as a villain like they want? I will say it honestly. I don’t understand your place. Because I didn’t live nor thought like you.



However if I were you, I would fight. Not with fists, but with cooking. Even if they hate me, I will make them not able to hate my cooking. Because that's what I can do. And you? What are you going to do? Because everyone hates you, and don't have any friends, you will give up? Do it. I won't hold you back."

Peter was putting a face like he was going to cry at any moment. But he wasn't doing so because of his pride.....

Was he twenty four. He was in a young age. However, just like Peter's age, he had a childish mentality. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

"If you are not able to give up, don't sulk. I won't tell you to not mind the ill comments. Because even i'm not able to do so. However just because of that, don't try to also give up your dreams. You survived until now. Just like you said, even if you lack sociability, at least it doesn't mean that you don't know how to cook. But of course, that day you made a little bit of a mistake."

Jo Minjoon smirked and slapped his back. Jo Minjoon touched his back as if he was surprised and soon started to look at his feet while laughing faintly. Silence roamed for a while, and while the sun was setting and the dark night was approaching, Peter opened his voice with an insecure voice.

"Will I.....Be able to?"

"You can if you try. Don't know about that?"

"Winning..... Will I also be able to win?"

"No."

Peter looked at him absentmindedly at the unexpectedly poured cold water. Jo Minjoon said in a blunt voice.

“Victory is mine.”

## Chapter 57: Travelling, Cooking And Business (3)

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Honestly, he didn't feel particularly attached to Korean cuisine. And he had many reasons. The food his mother made wasn't delicious, and there weren't any good restaurants near his house. But it would be different if he ate in a luxurious Korean cuisine restaurant.

Now that he looked, the Korean meals he could try were all salty, sweet or spicy. What suited his tastes was the *miyeokguk* or *bibimbap* he made in the past mission. He also liked not season plain white kimchi.

Modern people followed stimulation. And Korea wasn't exempted from that. It was hard to search for a restaurant that didn't write a msg, and even if they didn't, they had to use provocative ingredients to compensate for that lack. There were stores that attained success through a plain and simple flavor like *Pyongyang naengmyeon* (평양냉면), but how many people that weren't epicureans thought that it was delicious?

With that meaning, *kimbap* was a wonderful dish. The seasoning wasn't excessive and the flavor was simple. But even so, people liked it and if you didn't put in weird ingredients in it, anyone could make it to be delicious. And that's why. That's why Jo Minjoon could recommend *kimbap* to his teammates. But of course, what they were thinking about was *norimaki*.

But with the point that they immediately thought of *norimaki* like that, Jo Minjoon could get a certain amount of assurance in

this item. Because when he actually ate kimbap before participating in Grand Chef, was in a sushi store he saw by coincidence.

When he got in the restaurant wanting to eat sushi, he got surprised at the place full of customers. And he was also surprised that rather than normal sushi, kimbap sushi and norimaki were occupying almost all of the place of the displaying stand. He had known that white people didn't like laver that much, but asians didn't even number half of the half of the customers.

He could say that sushi, and the variety of it, norimaki had already succeeded in the world.

That's why he felt his heart getting lighter while making kimbap in front of his teammates. It didn't matter what you put in the kimbap. Because everyone agreed with norimaki. And the given concept seemed to have been decided.

What he gave them was normal korean kimbap. Cucumber, pickled radish, eggs, carrot, ham and burdock root. He used canned ham for the ham, but it wasn't really a problem. Because it didn't mean that he would present the dish just like that, but it was to teach them the characteristics of korean kimbap. Anderson chewed a few times and frowned.

“This, what oil you said was applied?”

“Sesame oil.”

“The aroma of the oil is too strong. I think that it would be better to put in less or to use another oil. I like the point that there's no vinegar or kelp water in it. Because only the fresh flavor of the rice

remains, I get the feeling that it suits well with the other ingredients. But I think that we have to prioritize not making the rice smell bad.”

“Doesn’t the laver smell bad?”

“I wouldn’t know if I ate it alone, but if I eat it with rice it’s good. I don’t smell fish that much. I’m just speaking objectively. There’s nothing to point out about the combination of the ingredients it contains. At least, it felt good inside my mouth.”

At Anderson’s words, Jo Minjoon barely took breath again. Seaweed wasn’t that familiar to westerners, but norimaki was a success. And the reason of that was because the vinegar and kelp water that was in the rice, caught the bad smell of the laver. He started to worry because in korean kimbap, there was no vinegar or kelp water to catch the bad smell.

“Could it be because of the sesame oil?”

“I don’t know. I will have to compare later. Why don’t you try it yourself if you have an absolute sense of taste?”

“.....Well, originally it’s difficult to know about your own dish.”

“There’s not much in absolute taste.”

Anderson smirked. Joanne looked at the separately made kimbaps and opened her mouth.

“What were the ingredients for these? Karaage, hamburger, sea urchin’s eggs, tuna, fried shrimp with avocado, smoked salmon, vegetables and assorted eggs, and.....I ate the else. What were they? I think that there were more kinds. Ah, Minjoon. Your that..... It’s so hard because there are a lot. Anyways, that korean

norimaki too.”

“The one with tandoori chicken, pork barbecue, and the normal kimbap I just made. And korean norimaki..... We can just write in the menu as korean norimaki. First, we should mix sesame oil with olive oil, or just use olive oil. And I think that it would be good to serve in thin slices, just like you ate before.”

“Let’s not do that and instead let’s slice norimaki in a 1 inch size, and leave aside normal norimaki the size of a finger. How about it? I thought that the slices you cut were really comfortable to eat. I think that it would also vary depending on the person.”

“That’s fine. But I think that it would be good to prepare the 1 inch sizes beforehand. I think that people will mostly prefer that. Because they are accustomed to it.”

As he talked like that and ate the avocado and smoked tuna kimbap, he felt the oily flavor of the avocado, the salty tuna, and aside of that the aroma of chili. It was a spicy flavor that felt good. He felt the tip of his nose get chilly and he he opened his eyes while frowning like a person who had eaten something acid.

It was delicious. The cooking score was 6, but it couldn’t be helped. Because he had put in smoked tuna, avocado and chile and just rolled it. Perhaps, getting a 6 was really an outstanding thing.

“Who made this?”

“Me.”

The one who had replied was Anderson. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes really big as if he was surprised.

“It’s really delicious. First, the salmon got smoked so softly.”

“Of course. Who made it?”

“It wasn’t tasty for me.”

Peter said bluntly. Anderson’s eyes became sharper. Peter hurriedly shook his hands and said.

“It’s not that your cooking was strange. I just keep feeling the flavor of the laver in the tip of my tongue. Is this a must? I think that it shouldn’t be a problem for the laver to be there.”

“.....Mmm. There’s something similar. It’s called rice sandwich. But do you not like it that much?”

“It’s just that i’m unfamiliar to it. I think that there would be few customers like me, so wouldn’t it be better to put in a few dishes in the menu with no laver in it? That rice sandwich you said for example.”

Peter’s words were quite appropriate. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon tried to seriously think about his proposal. Anderson shook his head and said.

“There’s no restaurant that satisfies all of your demands. If not, would they be selling beef? Indians don’t eat it. And even more so in a small place like a food truck. You just have to sell what you have to. And if it wasn’t a moving transport, but a restaurant, your words would be correct. Because if there are people that say that they just can’t tolerate laver, they would just leave. But this is a food truck. There’s no need to concern yourself.”

Anderson's words seemed quite right. Joanne opened her mouth admiring him.

“You thought of all of that in this short while? Aren't you rather intelligent?”

“I grew in a chef's house. This much is common knowledge. And it's also true that I am intelligent.”

“.....And just like intelligent people, you all seem to suck.”

At Joanne's words, Anderson snorted a hmph and said.

“Even so there are really few people that haven't tried norimaki in the world. I think that it would be better to write as norimaki sushi rather than norimaki. Because there are quite a few people that first eat if it says that it's sushi.”

“Those are some convincing words.”

Joanne opened her mouth. She raised her handphone and showed the community she was doing.

“If we announce that we are going somewhere, shouldn't viewers come like a flock? And if we also say that Minjoon is the team leader and also that the norimaki is the main menu, many people will come to find us. Because norimaki made by an asian team leader and norimaki made by a westerner is a different nuance. And Minjoon also has a lot of fans.”

“.....I have a lot of fans? It's a first listening to that.”

Joanne laughed and said with her mouth shape. ‘Kaya’. Jo



Minjoon let out a sigh and changed topics.

“.....I did hear that they were going to publicize in Grand Chef’s main page.”

“The first day we will certainly be able to sell everything out. But the problem is after that. As more bad comments are posted, less customers will come.”

“What if there are people that post ill comments without even having eaten it?”

“They won’t disappear by worrying. Let it be.”

Anderson replied with a cold voice. Looking at him, Jo Minjoon got the feeling that he was really from a chef’s house. Perhaps, he would have already experienced the problems they were facing right now. Through his parents, he would have suffered just as much as he has shared happy times.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that?”

“.....I picked you well, right?”

Anderson snorted.

“It would be the best decision you made in your life.”

—

Grand Chef’s house was located in Illinois, Chicago. The rent car company was also located inside of Chicago. However, during that

time they couldn't properly feel Chicago's air. And they were sloppily eating their first Chicago's meal.

Chicago pepperoni pizza. There was so much tomato and pepperoni you couldn't differentiate from each other that it was dyeing the pizza red, and on top of the finger sized dough, there were a lot of toppings in it. Jo Minjoon was slowly slicing the pizza in pieces so thick it was hard to put it in his mouth. The flavor of the cheese was strong, but the sticky and thick dough covered that flavor. It was a rather harmonious dish. However Anderson frowned.

"It's good that there's a lot, but you have to be able to eat it. Can they give you something you can't even fit in your mouth?"

"Why? It doesn't matter much if you slice it."

"Real pizza is eaten with your hands."

In these aspects Anderson was really picky and rather intimate. Ivanna asked while chewing the pizza.

"Minjoon, what score is the pizza?"

".....Can you stop asking me the score? I'm not scoring the food, but the cooking process."

"So wouldn't that be able to evaluate the food itself?"

"That's relative. It's difficult for an objective evaluation. So i'm feeling how complex was the flavor made, and how well it was cooked."

".....So what score is it?"

In conclusion they wanted him to tell the score. Jo Minjoon replied after gulping the pizza in his mouth.

“7 points. The dough was really well done. Just like the place that sells the best in this town.”

“Hmm. I thought it would be an 8.”

“Just like I told you, the flavor isn’t a 7. Because you don’t have to only cook in a high level to make a high level food. The norimaki we are making right now is just like that. Compared to the normal cooking method, the flavor is quite stable.”

And that was the biggest reason he proposed making norimaki. And at the same time, the reason why his teammates accepted it so well. You could make a wide varieties of menus simply and at the same time the combination of laver and rice gave them a sense of secureness.

But the biggest advantage was that it had all the points a food truck required. Variability, cost and capital. The ingredients to make norimaki didn’t even cost 1 dollar. However, the normal price was around 2 to 3 dollars. And also, taking into account the small size and that you could store it in the truck, the expectation towards it was quite high.

The time was almost past 9. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Let’s eat quickly and prepare. We need to at least open at 11:30.”

Norimaki wasn’t a snack but a meal. If they missed lunch time,

the repercussions could be as big. Jo Minjoon stood first from the place and checked at his handphone. There were a lot of comments about Grand Chef's food truck in the internet. It seemed to have attracted the attention of at least a thousand, or even ten thousands of people. Of course, there wouldn't be that much who lived in Chicago among them.

The breed of the rice was koshihikari. Compared to korean rice, koshihikari wasn't much better. Chinese rice wasn't bad to use in making kimbap or norimaki.

He didn't put other rices. He didn't know how healthy was mixing other rices, but the flavor was totally disgusting. Especially if he was going to use it for norimaki, there was nothing else to say. People who come to the food truck look for flavor, not the well being.

The iron pot was a 150 people use. One line of norimaki used up three spoons of rice. So sufficient amount they could make was at least 300 lines. Also if the rice was cooked in 20 or 30 minutes, he didn't have to be that burdened about rice as he had thought.

After Jo Minjoon put the rice, he checked the ingredients and etc. They were all fresh. His other teammates also stood up from the place and started to do their share of work. Peter too, was taking out the tandoori chickens he was storing in the fridge.

It wasn't a method where they made their own menus. They got in charge of one menu each, and when they were free they had to move according to the situation. What Jo Minjoon grabbed first was the hamburger. It was a recipe he had proposed, as a korean norimaki that seemed like kimbap. The first time he came to New

York, the flavor of the hamburger steak he tried in Lucas's house was still fresh. That strong aroma, and the texture and pepper he felt through his teeth. It had the most american flavor from all the things he tried.

But of course, it was difficult to imitate that. If he had to roll it in kimbap, he had to slice it thinly. And because of that, Jo Minjoon focused more on flavor than texture. When the exterior of the hamburger got yellow, he boiled it down in soy sauce, mirin, and lemon. Actually, it was a really popular japanese cooking method.

The atmosphere in the kitchen was basically calm. Rather than the teammates were calm, Jo Minjoon was like that. He didn't like to raise his voice without any reason. If he had something to say, he said in a voice that could be heard sufficiently, and even if he was in an urgent situation, he didn't yell.

Was it because of that? Time passed really quickly. Soon, it was past 11 o'clock, and the fryers and frying pans were all stopped. What they were doing seemed to be it all. Rolling the norimaki kimbap. And they had to cool it for a moment. Although in Korea, eating kimbap cold or hot didn't matter much, norimaki was a food that was basically eaten cold.

“Anderson. Check the situation of the tea.”

“After rolling this.”

There were three kinds of teas. Ginger tea, green tea and lemon tea. Anderson checked the boiling pot and said.

“It’s perfect. We just have to serve it.”

“The kimbap is also finished.”

Jo Minjoon spoke after finishing rolling the last smoked salmon norimaki. The team members looked at Jo Minjoon. He felt sound of his heart beating and extended his hand.

“Let’s go. We will just eat this mission whole.”

“.....That’s good, but must we do this?”

Anderson placed his hand on top of his and grumbled. 5 hands gathered and a loud yell was heard. Jo Minjoon opened the back door of the truck and went outside. And at that moment, he froze on that place.

“Huh, It’s Minjoon.”

There were no cheers. Just voices talking among themselves. But as countless voices were combined, he couldn’t help but hear it as they were yelling.

The customers were lined up.

So long he couldn’t even count them.

## Chapter 58: Travelling, Cooking And Business (4)

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He thought that feeling overwhelmed was something like this. Looking at the many colorful clothes, and the people from various cultures he felt happy and scared at the same time. The youngest PD approached and opened his mouth.

“Are you going to open now?”

“Yes.”

The PD nodded and returned with the staff. Martin wasn't there. Just like the participants split in three, the staff also had to split in three. And Martin was in charge of Chloe's team.

As he opened the side door of the truck, the team members that were preparing to take orders looked outside dumbfoundedly. Jo Minjoon understood them. Although Grand Chef had an influence in it, he had never thought that this amount of customers would come.

Jo Minjoon got inside the truck and opened his mouth.

“How should we do this? Two does the calculations and the remaining three keeps making some more? Making the rice lasts 30 minutes, hmm..... What ingredients are left?”

“We are out of beef. And there are only a few of avocado's.”

“.....Then we are excluding hamburger and tuna avocado. We will have to use the rice we were going to use tonight. What about

the other things?”

“There’s some roasted tandoori chicken left, would this be okay?”

“Norimaki is eaten cold, but even so if time passes more than it should, I think that it would start to feel bad. But let’s keep looking. There’s not even stored ingredients?”

“Yeah. We used it all.”

“I will first wash the rice. You keep taking on the orders.”

It wasn’t the time to be losing time. The four were standing in front of the displaying stand and wrapping the order and serving it. The one who was taking the orders and the money was Joanne. Honestly speaking, the remaining three didn’t have a temperament to take the orders of the customers easily. Anderson was mean, Ivanna was absentminded, and Peter.....was just him.

Excluding Joanne, Jo Minjoon could also serve the customers, but the one who washed rice the best was Jo Minjoon. And the process that took the longest on making norimaki, was cooking the rice. He had to prepare it beforehand.

He hesitated on the amount, but for now he decided to make for a hundred people. He had to fill two of the three rice cookers. Maybe, more customers would come, but in the case that they stopped coming, he had to compensate the losses.

He could use the remaining rice that night, but honestly he didn’t really like that. Because rice cooked on the moment, and rice after 5 hours had a clear difference between them. Even if he stored it well, the flavor could only fall. The customers that came looking



Grand Chef should be around half of them. He didn't want to disappoint them. Of course, with the minimal condition of the rice, it wouldn't vary too much for them, but it was the heart of a chef to want to give them a dish that was at least a little bit better.

“Minjoon, if you are done take the counter.”

“I am done, but why the counter?”

“I want to prepare some pork barbecue. And.”

Joanne whispered in his ear as if she was telling him a very important secret.

“People want you. You are a popular star.”

“.....If you thought of making me embarrassed you succeeded doing so.”

To be a popular star. He didn't know why that word made him get goosebumps. Jo Minjoon frowned, and soon put on a faint smile and approached the counter. As he stood in front of the counter, the first customer he saw was an asian girl. She had her mouth so wide it seemed about to rip, and was putting a flustered smile.

“Hello! I'm your fan!”

“Thank you. You are Korean.”

“Yes! I just heard that you were doing food truck business around here, so I immediately came with my car.”

The girl was talking in korean. Now that he thought about it, it had been a really long while since he had talked and met a korean. Feeling her exquisite perfume, he smiled and said.

“What’s your order?”

“One tuna avocado and one korean style. Two lines will fill me, right?”

“If you are not a heavy eater. It will be 4.5 dollars together.”

“Here. Win please! I will cheer for you.”

Jo Minjoon smiled instead of replying. She was not the only one asking about other things rather than the bill. Of course, there were many people that were cautious while asking, but even they asked him while he was putting the money and taking out some in the counter. And the question that occupied the most amount of percentage was obviously,

“Say honestly. What’s your relationship with Kaya?”

It was that kind of question. At first he said that he was nothing with her, but the ones listening to him didn’t seem to believe him at all. Well, even the other participants didn’t believe him.

But because of that, he couldn’t say what they wanted to listen to. Because truth was truth. Jo Minjoon just thought that they were just friends, or at most a kind of brother and sister.

Excluding the questions about Kaya, there were also good words among them. I saw well your cooking. I ask for a good dish. Are

you confident on winning? He replied appropriately to all of them, but it also took its own toll. In average, two or three people in one minute. And they would mostly buy two lines each, so after half an hour passed there were at least half of the norimakis from the 300.

The first one that sold out was obviously the pork barbecue. It was well known from old times the love of pork barbecue from americans. And likewise, the second thing sold out was the hamburger.

In the other hand, the least selling one was an unexpected menu. And Jo Minjoon thought that it would be the korean norimaki, kimbap. Of course, there were many kinds of norimaki that were filled up just like korean kimbap, but they had named it as korean. So he thought that it would be quite risky because of that.

But of course kimbap didn't do that bad. It was behind the second place. And the last one was urchins egg. Just when he had designed the menu, he thought that it wouldn't get good results, it seemed like urchin egg was lacking fascination for americans. But they were fortunate to not have made as much as the other menus.

“The rice should be almost done. Joanne! If you are done with the barbecue, come here to the counter.”

“Wait a moment. Give me a minute.”

Joanne replied without even turning back because she was really busy. The norimakis kept decreasing, but the lines were still really long. But compared to the start, it was affordable, but if you thought that the lines would keep increasing, 30 minutes would be

the limit with the norimakis they had right now.

“Done! Let’s change.”

Joanne approached him and opened her mouth. Jo Minjoon finished what he was doing and went back to the rice cooker. The rice was well done. Because he washed it more than usual, it didn’t smell bad at all, and each grain of rice had a beautiful shape. It was so well done that he unconsciously smiled.

“Anderson. Are the fried shrimps and karaage done?”

“I put it on the sieve. You can immediately use them when the oil is removed.”

Anderson wasn’t wrapping the norimaki from the start, but preparing the fillings. And it wasn’t excessive for him. Because one person was in charge of taking the orders, if they were only busy with no time to rest, it was an affordable pace.

‘Should we get one more person in the counter for tonight?’

It was hard. If it was like that, the remaining three would all have to concentrate on wrapping it. If he thought about adding help like just now, it was good that only one person was in charge of the counter. But of course, the speed the line reduces would decrease.

‘Should I change the selling method.....’

It was a problem he didn't have to think about right now. Jo Minjoon poured vinegar and kept water in the rice and carefully rubbed it. The rice needed to crumble the least amount possible to keep the clean flavor.

After that it was simple. Spreading rice in the laver, and rolling after filling it up. The kinds were each pork barbecue, karaage, and fried shrimp. From the remaining ingredients they had, these were the best selling menus. And they made twice the amount of pork barbecue this time.

As Jo Minjoon and Anderson wanted to roll all of those norimakis, it took quite a toll. The muscles in their arms stretched tightly, and the bent neck kept getting harder.

‘This is the tough part of the restaurant.’

As it is a restaurant with better quality menus, there were many cases where you had to keep repeating things without cutting the flow. Just when Jo Minjoon was working as the youngest chef in a luxurious restaurant, the scene he saw was similar. He had to keep cutting the vegetables consistently.

And that's why Jo Minjoon was rather delighted of this exhaustion. Because it was exhaustion originated from cooking, and not by preparing. It was his cooking. Their cookings. He could hold the knife, hold the pan, and make the customers smile. Just with that, his made became warmer. Anderson stuck out his tongue and said.

“.....Let’s rest for a bit. Anyways, there’s no need to roll this immediately. Let’s do it resting for bits. The speed we roll it should be faster than the speed it gets sold.”

“Rest for a bit. I will do a bit more.”

“If the team leader acts like this, am I able to stop?”

Anderson grumbled and kept rolling the norimaki. Jo Minjoon looked at him and laughed without him noticing. It was temporary, but it was still their restaurant. He had customers, and also good comrades. If he could someday be in this situation on the restaurant he would have some day.....

—

“I thought I was going to die.”

“Me too. Ah, talking is also hard right now.”

At Ivanna’s absentminded voice, Joanne sighed and agreed. They worked for a little more than two and a half hours. And they sold all of the norimakis without leaving a single line. But of course, in the case of urchin eggs, they bought it because there was nothing else to buy. Because it sold out only after the newly added barbecue, karaage and etc were also sold out.

Jo Minjoon smirked.

“Want to know something funny?”

“.....Looking that you are smiling, it doesn’t seem to be something fun. But first, talk.”

“After half an hour we have to start again.”

“... ..”

Joanne stared at him without saying anything. Ivanna also looked at him with a dour face next to her. Anderson let out a sigh.

“I did help my parents in their store, but this seems much more exhausting than that.”

“Standing still was also work. No, I think that standing was the harshest work. How can it be that it hurts more than my arms and legs that were moving?”

“Lean your heads back. Because in a while you won’t even have the time to loosen up your neck muscles.”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, the four of them leaned their heads back at the same time, as if they had agreed beforehand. It was really fortunate that there was a camera installed. Because, it was such a funny scene that if they missed it, it would be really regrettable. Jo Minjoon massaged his nape and opened his mouth.

“I’m curious as to what the other guys did. If they too had as much people as us, they wouldn’t have been able to properly shorten the line. Because such a simple thing like norimaki is this much of a pain.”

“Oh, thinking about it. About now..... Wait a minute.”

Joanne raised her handphone. At that moment, the other four all guessed what she was going to do. There would also be customers in the other team’s trucks, and they wouldn’t just be silent. So the

menu couldn't be helped but to leak out. Joanne looked at the screen for a long while. Peter, that was feeling stuffy, couldn't hold it any more and asked.

“What? What is it? Tell us quickly.”

“Wait a moment. I'm reading right now. First, Hugo's team is cake and coffee. It seems like they caught the concept of a coffee truck. And Chloe's team..... Seems to have made kochi or sandwich. But the problem isn't that. They say that they fought.”

“.....Did Kaya make trouble?”

Jo Minjoon's face got serious. However, Joanne shook her head. She looked at the screen as if she couldn't believe it and frowned.

“No. Chloe.”



# Chapter 59: Customer And More Customers

## (1)

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At that moment, the expression Joanne was putting spread in everyone's faces like it was contagious. They couldn't help it. Because in the past month, they had never seen Chloe getting angry. But that Chloe got angry?

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth with a perplexed voice. How surprised was he that his voice shook at the end.

“Saying that she had a fight, who was it with? Her teammates? Or..... the customers?”

“It seems like it's the customers..... You too take a look.”

At her words, they realized that they also had their own handphones. Jo Minjoon looked at the mentions in the screen without a word.

Elly Dean : They say that there was a scandal in Grand Chef's food truck. They say that a customer and Chloe fought as they were shouting.

└ CRJ : I was in that place, but Chloe wasn't to the point to be shouting. It is true that she had raised her voice, but compared to the customer it was nothing.

└ Elly Dean : @CRJ Why? What did she do?

└ CRJ: @Elly Dean I don't know why they started to fight, but I heard the people talking at that time. First, if she was planning to take the money selling this kind of trashy kochi. But the funny

thing was that Chloe didn't even get the money. So it means that that person hadn't even eaten a bite.

Samantha Croft : It wasn't a good scene to look at. I know that it isn't easy to cope with that, but Chloe had to bear with it.

└ Rhianna Pratchet : A situation where you just can't hold it also exists. You can easily say that you have to bear with it in any kind of trouble because you weren't in that situation yourself.

└ Samantha Croft : Now that you say that i'm saying it easily, I have nothing to talk back. But reality is like that. Even if it's hard and exhausting, if you have consideration towards the customer you shouldn't have made it bigger as to make it a fight.

There were no comments that explained the situation in detail, but the conclusion was only one. That Chloe fought with a customer. But the reason of that wasn't written. Well, a quarrel had happened when they were conversing among themselves near the counter. So it was hard for the people near to know the reason of it.

They wanted to message what was wrong, but in this kind of situation she wouldn't take any kind of consoling that well. Anderson said with a dry voice.

“That person should have been a considerable jerk. Because Chloe isn't the type to get angry easily.”

“.....It's amazing that from your mouth comes out words cursing someone like that.”

“I don't think that I was the type to like bad mouthing people.”

“That's not it, but I have never seen you complimenting

someone.”

“I didn’t compliment. I just evaluated as it is. She’s not the type to easily get angry.”

Anderson put his handphone on his pocket with a not too good face.

“Don’t mind it too much. We will get through that at least once. Because the world is wide and there are a lot of jerks. When that happens, try not to end up like this. Because what they want is to roll together in a mud bath. And of course, the laundry after that mud bath will all be our responsibility.”

It seems as if he had gone through it a few times, but he had talked just like a veteran. Jo Minjoon clapped his hands in a not too noisy manner.

“Well, let’s concentrate on our break. We are going to rest for an hour and a half, and after buying the ingredients, go back to cooking again. It’s a bit past 2 right now..... So let’s rest until 3:30 and go prepare the ingredients immediately.”

“But preparing the ingredients, there’s no need for all 5 of us to go, right?”

Peter asked. Those were some unexpectedly true words. Peter looked cautiously and slowly opened his mouth.

“Should we do it with rock, paper, scissors.....?”

“Have a safe trip!”

At the entrance of the market, Joanne smirked and shook her hands. Even if Anderson glared at her, it was useless. Jo Minjoon patted his shoulder and said.

“Let’s go. There’s no time.”

“.....tch.”

“What, it’s good. Because they chose to clean instead. It’s almost the same.”

“I don’t like the market.”

Anderson said. Jo Minjoon looked at him as if it was something unexpected. Because the market could only be a place that was friendly to the chef. Aside from the needs, as there were more things in the market, it was a fun place like a video games room for the chef.

Anderson looked at jo Minjoon. The doubt in his eyes were so dense it made him not notice it. Anderson raised his finger and blocked his nose and lifted it.

“I didn’t like the market since I was small. Because regardless of my opinion, I got dragged by my parents.”

“Even so, isn’t it time to change opinion?”

“They say that a habit since small, lasts all the life, so you can

forever hate what you used to hate when you were small. Just tell me what we have to buy. What do we have to buy?”

“You can roughly make 30 lines with 1kg of rice..... So let’s abundantly buy 20 kgs. Because customers can flock at night too. We already have chicken leg that’s going to be used for tandoori chicken, so we will have to buy a bit more of chicken breast and avocado for karaage and some smoked salmon. No. Thinking about the tandoori we have to make tomorrow, we will have to buy some chicken leg beforehand. We decided to remove urchin egg in the menu so we don’t have to buy it. We also have to buy the fillings for the kimbap and hamburger.”

Honestly, urchin egg was a menu that didn’t sell much to keep it. Even after it got up on the internet, the comments about urchin egg norimaki weren’t very good.

On the other hand, kimbap had quite a bit of demand. Compared to the other norimakis it didn’t contain vinegar or kelp water, but there were quite some people that liked that clean flavor. Anderson brought the market cart and said.

“If we didn’t have the cart, we wouldn’t even have been able to bring all the ingredients. That’s why I told you that three people had to come.”

“Just do it, and if it’s difficult we can just be three the next time. But aren’t you accustomed to it? You said that you have done this many times helping your parents.”

“Just because i’m accustomed to it doesn’t mean that it’s not hard.”

Those were words that were quite understandable. Because even when he was working in the restaurant as the youngest, getting accustomed to it and not being hard were two different things.

“Even so, we are fortunate that it’s norimaki. Because the ingredients are simple.”

“It’s not that simple because there are a lot of menus. First, making rice a few times is really bothersome. I think that Chloe’s team should have it easier. Because they just have to prepare the meat and the bread.”

“I think that it would also quite the toll depending if they make the bread dough themselves or not.”

Anderson got in the butcher instead of replying. Jo Minjoon was looking at his back without saying anything, and moved his feet.

The place he headed to was a place where they pounded the rice themselves. Because the oxygenation started when you pounded rice. The more recent the rice was pounded, the more delicious it became, and he viewed well that he had to suffer time to time for the sake of the customers.

‘.....I think that a few hours difference wouldn’t make that much of a difference.’

Saying the truth, doing the groceries after a meal was quite a hard thing to do. In the first place, the team members all agreed at serving the customers with ingredients that were even a little bit more fresh, but maybe they thought that it was a stupid thought.

We can fix it slowly. Jo Minjoon thought like that and opened his mouth.

“Give me just 20kgs.”

“You are quite diligent, also coming in the morning. You said that you were selling norimaki, right?”

“Yes. We are doing so in the east side of the market. In a food truck.”

“If I could leave the store, I would also go and eat.....”

The owner who had black hair and glasses said in a disappointed voice. At first glance, this young korean owner seemed to be in his thirties. Precisely speaking, he was korean american. Just that he didn't know how to speak korean.

The owner didn't think himself to be korean, but even so it seemed that he missed it quite a bit. At the same time, he seemed to be a fan of Grand Chef. The owner continued to speak.

“How do you feel after being in korea for a while? You also ate the food of the other participants, right? How was it?”

“It's different from time to time. I normally make not too seasoned food, so I make most of it salty, but It's still delicious.”

“Well. A good chef can make good food anywhere and anyhow. Use my rice well.”

That guy spoke just like he was the farmer that had harvested that rice himself. But Jo Minjoon didn't particularly point that out.

It was at the moment when he was leaving the store. His handphone rang. Jo Minjoon held the rice sack with one hand and took out his handphone. He thought that it was going to be Anderson, but the name that showed on the screen was out of his expectations. Jo Minjoon brought the handphone to his ear.

“Hello?”

[.....What are you doing?]

“I just brought rice and i’m returning right now.”

[ Why are buying rice now? Didn’t you buy it in the morning? ]

“I wanted to use the least amount possible and buy just at times. Is it too excessive?”

[ Overly excessive. ]

“Is it?”

After that, they both remained silent for a moment. Rather than they didn’t have any words to say, it seemed more like they were hesitating to bring that up. In the end, the one who talked first was Jo Minjoon.

“Is it fine?”

[ What? ]

“The atmosphere of the team. They say that Chloe fought with a customer.”

[ ... ... ]

No sound was heard through the phone. Jo Minjoon didn’t



pressure her. Kaya said in a mortifying voice.

[ It's because of me. That Chloe fought. ]

Jo Minjoon didn't get surprised. Because he thought that that was the case. Chloe wasn't the type to clash with the customer just because she got cursed. Especially if it was in the middle of a team mission, there was nothing else to say. Perhaps, if Chloe caused the problem, he thought that it wouldn't be for her sake, but for another one.

And if that other person was Kaya, then not even a little bit of it would be strange. Rather, it was too simple. Because Kaya was usually the troublemaker. However, there was no need to say that with his own mouth. Jo Minjoon didn't say anything and listened to her. A thick and rough voice. Her voice that seemed to have caught a cold, seemed harsher than usual.

[ That guy looked at me and said. That I seemed delicious. Well, even if his eyes were directed at me, perhaps he was talking about the kochi.....]

“Wait. What? What did that bastard say?”

[ I told you. That I seemed delic.....]

“No, stop it. There's no need to repeat that. So. So Chloe got angry at him?”

[ No. It's true that she got angry for my sake, but the story is a bit different. You know my temperament. I'm harsh and..... A little dirty. I'm not someone to just listen to that and keep my mouth shut. ]

Jo Minjoon got confused. There were many mentions in the internet, but none of them were related to Kaya. However, it didn't take that long for him to know the reason of it. Jo Minjoon forced a laugh.

“Chloe didn't fight because she was angry. She was protecting you.”

[ .....Right. ]

Kaya replied with a depressed voice. Because Chloe stepped out for her, the fight didn't get bigger than necessary. And the focus of attention also passed to Chloe.

Perhaps, it could be better this way. Kaya's image and Chloe's image. There were huge differences between them. If Kaya acted like that in the same situation, there would be many people saying that they knew that she was going to act like that. However, it was different in Chloe's case. Because just the broadcasted material about her, showed only good images of her. There could be a reason behind it. She was a person you could only think like that.

But of course, the probabilities that Chloe calculated all of that in that short moment were low. Maybe she just wanted to protect Kaya. But what was certain was that she did want to protect her. By becoming the center of attention by herself.

[ I..... Why am I like this? Why do I only cause trouble? ]

“It's not your fault.”

[ Aside from being at fault or not, I just feel to sorry to look at her face. ]

He understood her. How frustrated would she have been that the girl who was always grumbling, called him? Jo Minjoon couldn't open his mouth for a long while. He didn't know what he had to say. And in the end, the words he said,

“We can pick our customers.”

Was all. Kaya didn't reply. Only her faint breathing noise was heard like the wind.

“If you didn't choose, then you also have no responsibility nor fault.”

[ You are trying to console me with those straight forward words. ]

“So, you got consoled?”

[ .....I will cancel it. ]

At Kaya's words, Jo Minjoon rolled up his eyes. He didn't understand what she was canceling.

“What are you canceling?”

[ You getting ruined, i'm cancelling those words. I'm busy. I have to slowly start working. ]

“But you called fir.....”

Jo Minjoon stopped saying and looked at his screen. The call had already ended. Jo Minjoon looked at his handphone with a

perplexed face, and soon mumbled with a bitter face.

“The customer.....”

That word wasn't as sweet as he expected it.

# Chapter 60: Customer And More Customers

## (2)

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The night in Chicago was a little bit unsatisfactory compared to the afternoon. There was also the fact that people sought food truck less at night, but there was also that people considered to be a fan had already come in the afternoon. But regardless that not many people looked for them, the 500 lines of kimbap they made twice, sold out only after 3 hours had passed.

10 o'clock. Jo Minjoon was organizing the account book on the running truck. He wasn't accustomed to it, but if he thought it to be a math homework, it wasn't that difficult.

"We gained 1422 dollars today. But excluding the oil and ingredient fees, we gained roughly 800 dollars."

"I don't know if it's much or not."

Joanne talked with an ambiguous face. Jo Minjoon closed the book.

"We gained 160 dollars each. The whole day. Do you get it if I say it like this?"

"How much would it be in 1 year? 160 times 300, plus 60 times that and then 5 more....."

"58400 dollars. But of course, it's in the case you don't take days off. So if you exclude those days, then you can think as you get 50 thousand dollars less."

".....You are quick to think."

Jo Minjoon glanced at the other team members. They seemed to be so tired that they were nodding while getting asleep. But it was fortunate that they had a driver. Because if they had to also drive at night, honestly the exhaustion wouldn't be normal.

The truck was going to the northern parts right now. The destination was Waukegan. Normally, it was a place you could arrive in one hour from Chicago. It was a city without even hundred thousand of population, so they couldn't know how much they would be earning.

“If it was summer, it would have been fine to go around the beach.”

“Quite the creep.”

Joanne put on an odd smile. Jo Minjoon thought what she meant, and soon opened his mouth.

“.....No. Who said that I wanted to go to the beach because of that?”

“What's that?”

“Shut up. Let's sleep.”

The one who didn't let Joanne continue making fun was Anderson. He opened his mouth while leaning his head on the fridge. Jo Minjoon said dispiritedly.

“You have to squeeze out what you have to.”

“You will get lectured by Kaya if you get caught talking to a another girl.”

“.....It seems like you are having quite the fun?”

Anderson didn't reply and just raised the corner of his mouth with his eyes still shut. Jo Minjoon replied to that smile with just an honest sigh. Ivanna seemed to have woke up and rubbed her eyes. Her swollen face made her look like a baby.

“Yawn..... Where are we right now?”

“I don't know. John. How much more do we have to go?”

“It would be 20 minutes from now on.”

At Joanne's question, the driver replied gently. Joanne looked at Ivanna. Ivanna grabbed her stomach and said in a depressed voice.

“My stomach hurts because i'm hungry.”

“Endure it. Then you will only get fat.”

“Tiramisu. Hot dog. Pepperoni. Risotto. Spaghetti. Kebab.....”

“Stop! Why are you also bullying me!”

“They say that pain lessens if you share it.”

“You normally say that looking at a person that's suffering alone.....”

Anderson burst out of laughter with his eyes still shut. After only he finished laughing and even coughing, he opened his mouth. Joanne looked at him with an absurd face.

“What? Why are you laughing?”

“Ask that to the viewers when the broadcast ends. Because this scene will surely get to the screen.”

“Are you all awake? If we get to the hotel we will sleep then, so let’s start getting up.”

At those words, Anderson shook and woke up Peter. Peter that was sleeping without knowing what was going on in the world, got surprised and checked his surroundings with his half closed eyes.

“Wha, what is it? Did we arrive?”

“Not yet. But we will soon, so get ready.”

As they got out of the bus, there was piled snow in the windows, the roof or on top of the cars as if it had snowed recently. Anderson touched his hands with a flustered face. Anderson let out an admiration.

“This feeling, temperature..... It’s charming.”

“Why are you acting as someone who had never seen snow?”

“There’s no snow where I live.”

“.....oh, you said that you were from the west.”

Jo Minjoon nodded as if he had understood.

The place they were staying was in a motel. They had to save the money they had all they could. They didn’t have the money and leisure to sleep in a place like a hotel. And the rooms weren’t even



individual, but 2 and 3 person rooms. Of course, they were boys and girls rooms. Before they headed to their respective rooms, Jo Minjoon said strictly.

“Don’t forget that you three are going to the market. You will probably have to get out at 5. So sleep well.”

But contrary to what he had said, he couldn’t fall asleep. It wasn’t that Anderson and Peter had bad sleeping habits. They didn’t snore, and didn’t grind their teeth. Only, he started to think many things in his head. Precisely speaking, those were words. What could he do to raise the income, and what to minimize the costs.

He had thought plentifully, and even if he did think more and knew that it didn’t particularly change anything, he couldn’t stop feeling uneasy. The seat of the leader was like this. Those who didn’t know would feel this seat to be cool and honorable, but they rather felt more burdened.

‘Did I close the door?’

Jo Minjoon headed towards the door. The lock was closed. However, even looking at the closed lock, he couldn’t help but feel that it was opened.

With that uncomfortable feeling he returned to the bed, he just couldn’t get asleep.

He had already made the calculations of the income in his head, and he had also thought of the things that could happen from now on, so there was no way that he would fall asleep by using his head like that. Jo Minjoon kept thinking things that even he didn't recognize in his head.

And then, the alarm rang.

His body felt so heavy as if it was pressed under a rock. Jo Minjoon slowly opened his eyes. He started to think that the time had already passed this quickly. He didn't really feel as he had slept, but the flow of time was really fast to say that he was awake.

‘.....I want to sleep more.’

Jo Minjoon blinked with difficulty and looked next to him. In the bed next to him was Anderson, and beyond him was Peter. They seemed to have woke up looking that they were wriggling, but they were still in a dazed state. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. He had to at least wake him up. Jo Minjoon turned on the light and walked towards Peter.

“Hey, get up.”

“.....No, wait. I have something to think about.”

“Think about what? You are just sleepy. Get up. We have to go to the market.”

Jo Minjoon removed Peter's blanket entirely. Peter struggled and got up with a dazed face. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“If I were you, I would go a little bit earlier and rest later.”

“.....Okay. I will go.”

Putting aside the noise of the shower after Peter got in, Jo Minjoon lied down on the bed again and closed his eyes. He had to rest even a little more. Because he had to recover the most he could so he could endure this day.

‘What if I can’t sleep properly?’

“Minjoon, wake up!”

And his worry ended along with a bright voice. Jo Minjoon looked in front of him, still in a dazed state. Joanne’s bright blond hair got in his sight first. And her face was filled with a confident smile.

“I bought really good salmon for really cheap! I was able to buy it almost at the price of a processed good. With this, We will be able to make norimaki that’s more delicious than yesterday’s.”

“.....Didn’t you get out just now? You got so.....”

“What are you talking about? It’s already 8. Get up. Anderson went to wash himself.”

The sunlight was just as bright as her words. It was already morning. He felt rather sad. You originally don’t remember anything of having slept, but right at this moment, he didn’t even get the feeling that he had slept at all. Just a second ago, the

memory of him trying to sleep and closed his eyes was really fresh, but for 3 hours to have passed.

However, he couldn't get anymore late. Jo Minjoon hurriedly washed himself and went to the truck. The ingredients were almost identical to yesterday. Only the salmon was different. The frozen salmon belly fat showed a clear bright light and was proudly showing itself.

Although you would think that frozen goods would fall in quality, but salmon used to make tatataki or sushi, was the best eaten frozen. Because while it was frozen, the parasites and eggs in it all died. Jo Minjoon slowly read the window that appeared on top of the salmon.

[Salmon belly fat]

Freshness: 93%

Origins: Michigan

Quality: High

“.....Good. How much did you pay for it?”

“6 dollars for pound.”

“It's cheaper than I expected?”

“The owner lady said that she was a fan of Grand Chef. And she also cheered for you and Kaya.....”

“No, leave it at that. First, let's separate what we are going to use in the afternoon and at night. What about the price of the other ingredients?”

“Well, excluding salmon, they are mostly similar.”

Joanne talked like that and shrugged her shoulders. Jo Minjoon looked at the salmon and fell in his thoughts. Yesterday, they bought a pack of smoked salmon and after applying sauce, used it as a filling, but today the story was different. Jo Minjoon looked at the salmon with a serious face. Ivanna gulped and said.

“I want to eat it as tataki.”

“.....I was just thinking about that.”

Precisely speaking, they didn't want to eat tataki, but cook it like tataki. Because the better the quality of a salmon was, when it was used as tataki or sushi, the flavor got better. But of course, the difference wasn't that big as you could compare it, but originally, in the tasting world, that small difference decided it all. However Joanne looked puzzled.

“You want to put tataki in the norimaki?”

“If you want to make tataki, then it would be better to go as sushi? Looking at the reactions yesterday, they were disappointed and said that it would have been good if there was some sushi. It wouldn't be bad to put in a little. Oh, you didn't buy urchin egg, right?”

“Yesterday was a disaster. I'm honestly surprised that it got all sold out. People's hands didn't tend to go that way.”

There was no need to focus on a menu that didn't do well. You wouldn't know if you found the fault and improved it, but compared to urchin egg, the recipe of it wasn't even finished. And most important of all, he wondered how he could improve a recipe

which they didn't even like the urchin egg itself.

The cooking proceeded just like yesterday, with each having their own share. The selling location was in the city. Although Waukegan was a small city that didn't even have hundred thousand people, they thought that they would be able to profit with the food truck.

“Will people come like yesterday?”

“I think that there would be like yesterday's night. So we won't be as busy as to not have time to rest, so don't feel nervous.”

Jo Minjoon replied like that and got out after opening the back door. It was as he had expected. There were some customers lined up, but it wasn't as long as the line in Chicago.

He opened the side doors and he went to the counter. The extra rice was already prepared.

“What's the recommended menu of the chef?”

It was the question of the first customer. The smile that person had seemed to be more interested in Jo Minjoon's reaction rather than actually the recommended menu. Jo Minjoon smirked and replied.

“If you have a normal sense of taste, I recommend you the pork barbecue. Also, trying the korean norimaki wouldn't be bad at all.”

“Okay. Give me the two of them.”

Most of the customers had good will towards them. The greater part of them would be fans of Grand Chef, so maybe it was an obvious thing.

But of course, there were people that simply wanted to eat norimaki, but there was also a person they didn't understand at all. It was that kind of customer they were so worried about and didn't want them to come.

“This. I want a refund.”

The person who talked like that was an asian girl with a strong chinese accentuation. At that moment, Jo Minjoon couldn't control his expression and looked at her with an absurd face. The norimaki in her hand had only the end part remaining.

“What?”

“I want a refund.”

“.....Did something strange come out?”

“It's not tasty. It's weird. The flavor of the tuna is weak. In my hometown, if you presented something like this, you would have to immediately close your doors.”

Only then did Jo Minjoon feel that something was wrong. The clothes she was wearing seemed to be quite expensive and luxurious, but the atmosphere she had was nothing close to being luxurious. Even while standing still, she was tottering as if she couldn't balance herself, her eyes were sunken and her way of

talking seemed to be like a drunk person. On top of that, what she was holding right now wasn't tuna avocado. But tandoori chicken.

Is she drunk, or.....

“What do we do?”

Behind him, Joanne whispered. Jo Minjoon hesitated for a minute. He too, had worked in a restaurant. He knew well how he had to act to all kinds of jerks. Even if they did something unfair, or something unthinkable of, it was better to back down.

That was reality. Because when that customer returned to her home and post a weird comment on the internet, the sales would instantly drop. On top of that, it was better to clean the situation quickly rather than fighting with the customer for some money.

However, the problem was leaving a precedent. Maybe, if they did refund the norimaki with just that much remaining, if another customer did the exact same thing, they would only have to accept it. Because if they said why can he and I can't, then there was nothing else to say. But of course, the number of customers that did that wouldn't amount to much.....

Jo Minjoon let a sigh inwardly. He opened his mouth.

“I'm sorry, customer.”



# Chapter 61: Customer And More Customers

## (3)

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It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was talking out the bill to give it to the woman. The other customers jeered and sent woo's. The woman looked at them furiously.

“What are youu? People that are eating this kind of things are jeering at me? I feel smothered.....”

“Customer.”

Jo Minjoon said in a low voice. When the woman turned her head, he flinched at that moment. How could he express it? No, there's no way to express it magnificently. Those were cold eyes. The rage she had accumulated in all her life seemed to be contained in those eyes.

“I'm thankful for you to have ordered trusting in these lacking chefs. And i'm also sorry that I couldn't satisfy you to what you have expected. But, you can't express that disappointment with the other customers.”

“.....Ha, haha.....Are you teaching me right now?”

“There's no way I would be. I think that there would be no one that doesn't know of this. And I think that you would also know it well. Is th.....”

Even before he could finish his words, the woman threw the norimaki as naturally as she would throw paper. Jo Minjoon picked that up and stopped the security that were running to him

with his eyes. And then he put it in his mouth.

The people looked at him with their eyes wide. They couldn't guess what he was trying to do. Jo Minjoon said in a calm voice.

“I don't feel tuna at all. Because this is tandoori chicken.”

“Tandoori! I hate India! That's not food. That's a disgusting stomach present.”

At this point, he didn't even have the heart to get angry. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and took out a bill from his counter. And then, opened his mouth.

“It's the 2 dollars you wanted. Take it.”

The atmosphere was strange. Certainly the woman was shouting bad words, and Jo Minjoon should be giving her back the money with no other options. But it seemed that Jo Minjoon was forcing himself to give it to her. The people that were lined all recorded it with their handphones. Probably, tens of these video's would get uploaded.

The woman hesitated and grabbed the money. Jo Minjoon bent his head respectfully.

“I'm sorry for the lacking food.”

Someone applauded. That one sound kept piling up and became

as big as a snowball. The woman grinned, and went past the people with an anxious look. Jo Minjoon apologized to the man he was taking the order just then.

“I’m sorry. I made you disturbed while I was taking the order.”

“There are a lot of drugged people around here. As a resident, i’m more sorry.”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly. It wasn’t a job smile. But an ordinary one.

“What will you be ordering?”

—

“You remember that customer four days ago, right? It’s quite the topic in the internet.”

At the youngest PD’s words, Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. He also knew that it would become a topic to a certain point.

“There are a lot of accidents in this wide country, so becoming an issue for a trouble with just one customer, makes me feel amazed.”

“Because you are a star. Minjoon, at least you will be one while you are on Grand Chef. Of course, after that..... It will depend on your capability.”

The youngest PD, Robert Banks, talked like that. Jo Minjoon

nodded without saying anything. Robert wasn't letting him rest at all. It was the first interview as a PD. And it seemed that he was quite flustered because of that. Because he was putting the most passionate face he had seen until now.

‘But i’m tired.’

After the food truck started and during the 5 days, Jo Minjoon always slept like he had fainted. He didn't recover fully, and because of that his body always felt heavy. He thought that he wouldn't feel burdened, but it seemed that the anxiety was deep in his heart. Only then did Robert notice that Jo Minjoon's eyes were sunk and that his skin was coarse. He asked cautiously.

“Is your body in not good conditions?”

“.....I'm a little tired.”

“Cheer up. If you hold on for two more days, you will be able to rest for a while.”

Those were only formal words of consolation. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly and rubbed his fingers. The sewed finger didn't usually hurt, but when he was tired like right now, he felt sudden pains like a needle was poking him.

“In your opinion, who do you think will do best? I'm not evaluating your confidence as a team leader, so feel relieved to reply.”

“.....I wonder. Aside from confidence, I think that our team has the most chances to win. I heard that Hugo's team is a cafe truck, but there's a limit to how much you can bake inside a truck. So

they would have come up with a good strategy but, just by looking at the reaction in the internet you can know to a certain point. Because there are a lot of people complaining that it's too expensive. They crumbled the expectations that it was going to be cheap. I think that was a bad move.”

“Looking that you are replying so fluently, it seems that you usually think a lot about these things. So what about Chloe's team? Why do you think you will be able to beat them?”

Jo Minjoon smiled with an exhausted face.

“It's the same reason. They said they were selling roasted kochi or sandwich. Those are food that are harder to make than kimbap. As your body gets tired, you can't sell all the day. Well, it's the same for us..... but looking at the sales, I think that our team will be better off.”

“Then your conclusion is that you have confidence in winning. ....Okay. Minjoon. You can leave now. Looking at your face i'm not able to continue the interview. Rest for a while. Oh, thinking about it, it would be difficult to rest right now.”

It was just as he had said. Because, the 6th episode was soon going to be broadcasted. Even if he was tired, he could only check. But it wasn't simply Jo Minjoon's story. No one from the participants missed the live episode.

As he got in the motel room, beyond the cameramen were his team members gathered.

“Did it start?”

“It will soon.”

Anderson replied casually. Jo Minjoon sat in the bed and looked at the screen.

The 6th episode was about the vegan mission. It was the mission that sent him to the disqualifying mission. And at the same time, the episode that announced his absolute sense of taste.

“I think that the reaction of the people would be no joke.”

Joanne said as if she was expecting it more. Jo Minjoon didn't reply and just looked at the screen. Before he knew it, the broadcast was starting.

The director seemed to have decided putting Jo Minjoon as the focus point, but the face that appeared along the start was Jo Minjoon's. He, from the screen, was talking with a clear voice.

[ Since small, I used to think that chefs were really cool. But maybe because I was too small, when I got older I couldn't challenge it as easily. Because the dreams from when you were small felt somewhat light and childish. I tried to convince myself that I wanted to become a chef because I didn't know reality, and I wasn't mature enough. But that wasn't it. That wasn't a light, nor a childish dream. It was the only path I could walk being myself. ]

Along with those words, scenes of Jo Minjoon cooking passed by. Catfish meatball stew, bream, the foie gras he made with Kaya and

the agedashi tofu he made in the three course. Anderson gulped. It wasn't simply because the dishes in the screen seemed delicious. It was because the BGM(\*background music) and that scene made you nervous.

After the announcement of the vegan mission, the camera focused solely on Jo Minjoon cooking. It was to the point that it made you think that it was a bit excessive, but thinking about the soon to come scene, it was understandable. Because even Anderson recognized what had happened that day. Because even he got greatly astonished.

[ In my opinion, I think that Minjoon isn't making one dish, but a korean table meal. ]

[ Table meal.....Will you have enough time? ]

Jo Minjoon concentrating on cooking to the point he didn't answer the question of the judges seemed to be quite serious. Jo Minjoon was surprised. Because he didn't even know that the judges had talked to him at that time. Joanne opened her mouth.

“What guts did you have as to not reply to the judges?”

“.....I was so concentrated I didn't even notice they had come.”

“You were concentrated like that but why is it miyeokguk and bibimbap? Just at first glance, isn't it a menu that's difficult to pass?”

Jo Minjoon didn't reply and looked at the screen. Joanne grumbled. “Now he's also ignoring me.” Peter that was looking at their conversation said in a low voice.

“Maybe it was for the better.”

“What? What did you say?”

“That it was good that it happened. Because he disqualified at that time he could show his absolute taste. And if it didn’t happen, he wouldn’t have had the chance to do so.....”

“Now that I listen to you, you are right.”

“Sh. Shut up.”

Anderson glared at the both of them with sharp eyes. The evaluation was starting. After Chloe’s evaluation ended, after they evaluated one more person, it was Jo Minjoon’s turn after that.

And of course, everyone knew the results. The judges that tried his dish were discussing between them with a regrettable face. Peter glanced at his handphone and checked the reactions. They were mostly watching it live, so there weren’t many that were posting comments, but even so they were really optimistic. Because they already knew that Jo Minjoon came for the food truck mission. So whatever happened he wouldn’t get disqualified, so they could stop worrying, that was what they seemed to be thinking about.

‘But the real bomb is not that part.’

Although he didn’t really have an absolute taste, he felt quite fun while thinking at the reactions of the people when the soon to appear ability of Jo Minjoon is shown.



But it wasn't merely Peter that was like that. Joanne, and Anderson had their hearts beat wildly at the expectation. Ivanna was absentmindedly seated like usual, but normally, even if it wasn't your story you couldn't help but feel flustered.

They were like this, then how would the concerned person feel? Anderson looked at Jo Minjoon while thinking like that. But Jo Minjoon's face was comparatively calm. No, rather than saying calm he had an exhausted expression. He would have felt quite exhausted for the past days, but to be acting like that in front of the best climax of his life. It was at that moment when Anderson's eyes were faintly filled with worry.

[ I'm sorry. You are a disqualifying candidate. ]

At Joseph's voice, Anderson turned his head. The evaluation continued. And soon, the 8 disqualifiers gathered to do the mission.

The mission you had to guess the contents of the fried tofu pocket. It was a mission that getting 5 right would be fine. And actually, they ended after getting around 5 right. It was at the moment when the 7th participant, Dany, got 11 ingredients right that where they yelled cheers.

And then, it was Jo Minjoon's turn.

The words he had said in the past were shown again in the screen. And the judges and the other participants were talking good about him. And it was at that moment. Jo Minjoon didn't

even hesitate and named the ingredients one by one.

And the result was as they had known. Twenty ingredients, and twenty correct. And the shocked faces of the judges was shown on the screen. And probably, all of the viewers would be having the same face. Anderson turned on his handphone. Maybe, Immediately in the Y portal's main, Jo Minjoon and his absolute sense of taste were rising to the top of the searcher.

What kind of face would Jo Minjoon be having? Thinking like that, Anderson looked back at Jo Minjoon. And he just smirked after that.

He was asleep.

—

It was a place that couldn't be absent in the business circle when you were looking for a big hand. It was Rose Island. Even at first glance, this restaurant like name was really a restaurant. Only, it had a reason as to why it was called 'big hand' compared to the other restaurants. Rose Island had 37 restaurants around the world, and if you combined the Michelin stars of those restaurants, it would amount to 27.

And the owner of Rose Island, Rachel Rose, was rumored to be really strange. There was rumour that at times she was benign, at times cranky, and at times calm. There were all kinds of rumours, the protagonist of those rumors was an old woman that was shedding tears while seated on an armchair.

Sixties. Her body was too old to be shedding tears. Although she had never thought of herself to be old, but she knew well that she wasn't in the age to act like a girl. But at this moment, she was feeling flustered like a little girl. Her eyes were looking at the TV screen in front of her. Inside the screen, Jo Minjoon was staring at the camera after naming all twenty of the ingredients.

“.....Isaac, Isaac!”

“Yes, headchef.”

“Stop calling me head chef. When was it that I left the kitchen?”

“Even so, for me you are an eternal head chef.”

Rachel looked at her secretary that was aging with her, with an unsatisfied face, Isaac looked at her with a suspicious face. She had been with her for more than 40 years, but it was the first time she had expressed herself like this after her husband died. So he was rather glad. Because that old girl seemed to have found energy in a long while, Isaac smiled brightly.

“Did you have something you wanted to tell me.....?”

“Grand Chef. You will have to contact with the PD of that program. No, that's not it. I will personally have to do it.”

“Is there a reason that you got suddenly interested in it?”

“We can talk about those things later. Isaac. The most important thing is that I have to meet that youth. The fastest possible.”

“Yes, I will look into it immediately.”

Isaac replied respectfully and left the room. Rachel looked at the

screen with her mouth shut. And then, kept repeating the name of the participant she was looking right now.

“Min.....Joon.”

# Chapter 62: Aftermath (1)

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Louise Russell : Honestly, I think that this can only be made up. That an absolute taste that had never appeared once in history to appear right now? And on top of that, in a cooking program?

└ Daniel Wood : Don't bring up conspiracy theories. It's a program that does well even without that kind of making up, so would they need that kind of noisy marketing?

└ Louise Russell : @Daniel Wood Greed never has an end. Look at the reactions of the people. Although Grand Chef was already popular, did it have a reaction this hot?

└ Daniel Wood : @Louise Russell With time, you will get to know with if it's the truth or not. Don't go changing your word when that happens.

A. J. Black : If this is true..... Wow, I don't have particularly anything to say. But does the flavor of those things feel that different? Can there be a minimal difference we can't sense?

└ Selena Curry : I think that there is, looking that he got all 20 right. I'm envious. I also want to feel all of those flavors.

└ A. J. Black : @Selena Curry But I wonder if all of those flavors are all good. Perhaps, if he feels a bad smell or something that we can't, I think that it would be difficult for him to eat food deliciously.

└ Selena Curry : @A. J. Black Even so, isn't it an extremely outstanding ability for a chef? Because he can control all of the minimal flavors the customer can't feel. But of course, it would be pointless that they can't even feel it, but even so it would have an unconscious effect.

└ Jacob Shariff : @Selena Curry He would be more outstanding as an epicurean rather than a chef. The restaurants won't even be

able to make a joke on him. And they would also shake of fear because of his evaluation.

Daniel Wood : The broadcast PD would be feeling great. He threw away the next without expecting anything but he caught a whale. With that kind of ability, his potential on broadcasts would be outstanding, although I don't know about his real cookings.

└ Nadia Newton : I think that he would be offered to do a lot of commercials. Celebrities don't tend to participate in commercials because they charge a lot, but in the case of Minjoon, who isn't a celebrity, they won't pay him as much. A product that was recognized by someone who possesses an absolute sense of taste! Isn't that quite charming?

└ Daniel Wood : @Nadie Newton Well, there's some truth in that. But if he keeps doing that, I think that later on he will be asking for a lot.

└ Nadia Newton : @Daniel Wood What's certain is that Grand Chef caught a big fish.

Martin read all the comments that were posted on the internet. The smile on his face didn't disappear for even a little. The reactions were hotter than he had thought. It was understandable. The moment when Jo Minjoon got the 20 ingredients right consecutively, the number of viewers surpassed 7 million viewers. Thinking that normally, it didn't surpass 5, 6 millions of viewers, it was a great result. Probably, it would be the day with the most viewers in the history of Grand Chef.

On top of that, the number of people that uploaded a video of only the part of Jo Minjoon doing the disqualifying mission was huge. His activity that was spread through every kind of mediums,

called more and more people. That video surpassed 10 million viewers in a day, so if more time passed, they couldn't guess how many more people will view it.

And right now, his handphone was ringing without stop. Replying to all of them seemed to take a full day. He replied most of them with an automatic tone, and he couldn't even relax while replying the necessary ones. It was then when he was doing that. The bell of his handphone rang again, and his casual face when checking the screen disappeared in an instant. He raised his body that was buried deep in the car's chair, and picked up the phone.

“Ra, Rachel Rose! Is it really you?”

[ Looking at your reaction it seems that you didn't erase my number. ]

“How will I easily erase it when I got it with such difficulty? But why did you.....?”

Actually, there was no need to even ask. Because the people that were calling him right now all had the same objective. First, confirming that the absolute taste was real. Second, if he could connect them to Jo Minjoon.

And it was no different because she was Rachel. Martin forced to calm down his beating heart. When Grand Chef started, he had used all kinds of methods to make her come. But of course, he returned empty handed, but instead he got her disciple Alan, so he wasn't feeling that disappointed. Naturally, his attitude could only be good.

[ There's something I want to ask you. Will you tell me the truth? ]

“Of course. Even while thinking about Alan's face, I wouldn't dare to lie.”

[ Thinking about it, that kid Alan knew about this but didn't tell me. Well, let's talk about this later. ]

At this moment, Martin apologized to Alan inwardly.

[ The absolute taste, is it true? ]

“There's not even a bit that was made up.”

At that moment, he felt that through the handphone a sigh of relief was heard. Perhaps, she was earnest that Jo Minjoon had the absolute taste. It was at that moment when Martin opened his mouth. Rachel talked first.

[ I want to meet him. ]

He had expected it. However, he didn't know what he should tell her. Even if he was a participant, he couldn't make an appointment without Jo Minjoon agreeing. It was at that moment when he wanted to say that his opinion was the most important thing, Rachel said.

[ Of course, you will have to get an appointment with him first. I understand that. However, I just can't hold it. Because i'm the type that I have to eat something immediately if I want to. But instead, I will give you a gift. The scene captured in the screen today, you



can use it however you wish. ]

“.....Yes? I’m sorry but I don’t get what you are saying.....”

[ I will become his customer. His truck, it was in Madison right now, right? ]

At that moment, the puzzle in his head completed. Present, the captured scene today, Minjoon, and truck. Madison. Martin got shocked and raised his head. Of course, what he saw was only the ceiling of the car.

“Are you maybe thinking of being his customer personally.....?”

[ Ah, the plane will soon be arriving. We will talk the remaining later, have a good day. ]

“Yes, yes.....”

Martin looked at the hung up phone dumbfoundedly. He didn’t feel that this situation was real at all.

“Does the rating god love me?”

—

The aftermath of the absolute taste wasn’t weak at all. People who were interested in cooking or tasting all talked about Jo Minjoon, and on top of that, people who weren’t interested at all also saw his video.

And of course, Korea wasn’t an exception. Just with the truth

that a korean was participating in it, in Korea, many articles about Grand Chef were roaming around.

And Lee Hyeseon also could not have seen it. And the result of that, Jo Minjoon had to pickup the phone in the middle of doing the groceries.

[.....Since when did you have that kind of ability? ]

“I think that since I was small. But I have recently known that I sense different things compared to the others.”

[ Whew..... Even I don't know what's what. People from all around are talking about you, but I feel good and anxious at the same time. Because getting attention isn't a comfortable thing. Are you okay? ]

“It's not that hard yet. Oh, mom. I'm sorry but I have to prepare to cook. So I will call you again later.”

[ Okay. Do well. I will cheer for you. ]

“Yes.”

Jo Minjoon put back his handphone in his pocket. He was exhausted. It was because he hadn't slept well, but it was also because today, it seemed that people from the market recognized him more than before. Some had also asked him to try their food so.....

‘I just have to endure today, and tomorrow.’

Now, he could only beat the exhaustion with his mental strength. The problem was that it also started to wear down, but he thought

that he just didn't have to faint.

As soon as he got in the truck, his teammates sent him a preoccupied sight. Also they felt that Jo Minjoon was having it hard recently. Peter opened his mouth.

“Are you okay, Minjoon? What about resting for lunch? The four of us can do it all.”

“Leave it. We are doing the same things but some rest while others work. It's not good to see.”

The dream is meant to fight your way through. He didn't have the leisure to sound weak. Anderson said with a blunt voice.

“Rest for now. I bought some sandwich, so eat if you want.”

“.....Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon received the sandwich. It was nothing special. Cheese, lettuce, prosciutto and mustard sauce was everything in it. However, maybe because the bread was so soft that he felt like he was eating well cooked rice.

He didn't know why, but when he gulped down the sandwich, the top of his temple hurt as if it was being poked by a needle. Even eating could be this exhausting. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly and left half the sandwich.

The business continued regardless of his condition. Jo Minjoon put on the rice to cook with his hands shaking, and helped the

others cook.

Madison was a city located in Wisconsin. There were vaguely a million of inhabitants, so it was a fairly big city in the US.

The place they parked the truck was in the middle of Wisconsin's university and downtown, where it was bustling the most. Because next to the university was the city hall, they thought that it will be bustling with students and government employees. Actually at this point, it was a priority to find a place where customers had it comfortable rather than a place where more people would gather. Because Grand Chef's mark was the perfect advertisement.

Their team's norimaki was getting quite good reactions even in the internet. Of course, perhaps they could be fans of them, but even if they were, there wasn't a case where they would say that something was delicious when it wasn't. And they were slowly getting more confidence in their cooking. They thought that they could satisfy any kind of customer. Joanne opened her mouth.

“.....Would there be more customers than usual?”

“Why? Because of Minjoon?”

“Yeah. Wouldn't there be more curious people that had seen it and come to eat more than usual?”

“I wonder. I think that people who are curious about that would usually have been curious about our cooking. But of course, there may be more customers than before.....”

In conclusion, there were more customers than usual. However, it wasn't an overwhelming number. Maybe, it was simply because

of the good location, but the number of customers was similar to the first time in Chicago.

Only, the reactions were certainly different. As they saw Jo Minjoon standing in front of the truck's counter, the long line of customers cheered and blew whistles. Jo Minjoon that wasn't thinking of anything could only be perplexed by that intense reaction.

“Is it really absolute taste?”

“Using your evaluation method, what score is this norimaki?”

“Isn't it tiring when you usually eat? Because you are too sensitive.”

“I'm your fan! I'm sorry, but can I get your autograph?”

Almost all of the customers tried to say something to him. And because it was next to an university, there were a lot of young people. Only if they calmed down a little, they could know that Jo Minjoon's face was so haggard he couldn't even talk properly. So because of that it was more fortunate. If it wasn't because of that face, there would be more people trying to want to talk longer.

“Minjoon, i'm sorry but you will have to slowly prepare the rice.”

“Okay, I will go after this customer.”

Jo Minjoon replied to Joanne and looked in front. There was a woman with wrinkles in her face. If she was a korean, she had the appearance that seemed to be in her seventies, but taking into account that westerners aged quickly, he couldn't know. Jo

Minjoon smiled and opened his mouth.

“Welcome. What are you going to order?”

“I want to talk with you right now, but you are really busy, right?”

“.....That’s right. Because there are a lot of customers.”

Jo Minjoon replied while smiling awkwardly. He didn’t know that even this old grandmother would want to talk with him. It was at that moment. Anderson, that was wrapping the norimakis next to him glanced the surroundings and opened his mouth.

“Rachel Rose.....Are you perhaps Rachel Rose?”

“What? Where?”

At Anderson’s words the other team members turned their head, and put a surprised expression. Only then did Jo Minjoon notice that the cameramen were filming them with quite a serious face. And on top of that, even the customers were taking pictures of her.

‘Is she famous?’

Rachel smiled.

“It seems like you don’t know who I am.”

“.....I’m sorry. I don’t know much about famous americans.”

At his words, the customers that were listening to him burst out of laughter. Jo Minjoon didn't understand their reactions. Did it mean that she wasn't famous? Rachel took out her wallet.

“First, we will have to calculate the money thinking about the other customers.”

“Yes, what are you going to order.....”

As he talked like that, he saw at what she had gave him dumbfoundedly. It wasn't a bill. It was a cheque. And a thousand dollar cheque at that. Rachel opened her mouth.

“Golden bell, can I ring it?” (TL: It means that she is planning to buy everything.)

Jo Minjoon forced a laugh.

“You can't.”

## Chapter 63: Aftermath (2)

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Jo Minjoon's voice was filled with determination. He wouldn't know if it was a normal food truck, but right now they were in the middle of a mission. If they sold everything to a wealthy fan, then at that time it wouldn't become a competition between chefs, but between the more popular ones.

So because of the fairness, it was the right decision to have declined Rachel's golden bell.

But the result of that was that Rachel had to wait for them to finish the business. And because of that, the one who got more nervous was the youngest PD, Robert. A figure that can't be out of the american business circle, no, the world's business circle was right besides them. In that situation, if Robert didn't feel pressured then his liver would be really small.

Rachel didn't mind Robert and brought the tuna avocado norimaki to her mouth. Because the laver that was for kimbap uses was processed many times, it had just a suitable feeling. It wasn't tough, nor crunchy. From the tuna that was mixed with mayonnaise was felt a faint aroma of balsamic vinegar, and olive oil; in the texture of the avocado, a hidden fresh aroma, and the abundant oil flavor caught the overall balance.

Each time you chewed, the laver stucked in the ceiling of your mouth, and the rice grains roamed cutely and tickled your tongue. The aroma of the tuna was felt in all the mouth, rather than only the tongue. It was tasty. Maybe it was because it was seasoned with kelp water and vinegar, that the rice was felt fresh and deliciously,



and the result of that was that it didn't make you tired of any flavor even if it was mixed with anything.

It as a flavor that stuck to the basics. Of course, using the balsamic mayonnaise was like a fresh try, but it wasn't the important point. The important point was they handmade the mayonnaise themselves and tried to put the efforts and dedication in this small norimaki.

‘They have the basic heart of a chef.’

Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon that was standing in front of the counter with warm eyes. Even at a glance, he had a face that was full of exhaustion, but at the same time, the smile in his face to the customers didn't have a trace of lie. She rather liked that.

“Um.....Do you want to drink mojito?”

“No, i'm okay. Green tea is plenty for me.”

She thought that it was a little oily, but the fresh and pure flavor of the green tea washed her tongue and throat. Because she felt that she had eaten a healthy meal, a smile appeared in Rachel's face.

In the other side, the inside of the truck was filled with confusion despite that it seemed normal in the outside. It wasn't that they had a problem while selling. Only, the presence of Rachel Rose made them not able to calm down. Even Anderson, who had a cold and composed attitude, seemed to be filled with excitement.

Jo Minjoon asked with a confused voice.

“Just who is she?”

“You.....really don’t know? No, right. It’s understandable. Because it’s been more than 10 years that she hasn’t appeared on TV. You, do you know Rose island?”

“Oh, I think I have heard of it. It’s a restaurant.”

“It’s not any restaurant. It’s the most acknowledged place in the world, and that person is the owner.”

Anderson said with a frustrating voice. Jo Minjoon didn’t reply back and kept taking the orders. Saying the truth, he wasn’t really interested in it. Even if she was the owner of one of the top restaurants, she was a person he had never seen. As Anderson had said, the biggest reason seemed that she didn’t come out in TV. Previously, Jo Minjoon had seen many videos about cooking from all around the world, but they were mostly recently filmed. If it was about a star chef from long ago, there was no way he could know about them. Because when she worked in TV the most, it was when Jo Minjoon was only in primary school.

It was at that moment. Joanne saw that Jo Minjoon hadn’t reacted at all, and said some words.

“Oh, right. If I say it like this you should understand. She is famous for being Alan’s master.”

“Yes, it will be 4 dollars. Thank you. ....The Alan I know?”

“Yes. It’s just a rumour, but it seems like Martin originally

wanted to call Rachel instead of Alan.”

Listening to that, he started to see her in a new light. Jo Minjoon glanced at Rachel. And soon, got a chill. Rachel was staring at him nonstop. Her face was filled with a smile, but he felt like he was facing the director when he was still in school.

Jo Minjoon mumbled quietly.

“She won’t hate me because I didn’t let her ring the golden bell, right?”

—

The business proceeded in quite a busy manner. Only for lunch, he had to make rice two more times, and the result of that was that the amount of norimakis amounted to more than 700. It was the best they had sold in one time.

“.....Your absolute taste, it seems like it had quite an effect.”

Joanne said. Jo Minjoon just shrugged his shoulders. It was at that moment. The people who were waiting for them for almost two hours stood up from their places. A gulping sound could be heard. It was Anderson. He was putting a nervous face while sweating cold sweat. He approached Rachel.

“Hello, teacher. I’m Anderson Rousseau.”

“Rousseau? It seems familiar..... oh, are you maybe the son of Fabio and Amelia?”

“Yes. I remember having met you a few times when I was small.”

“Right. I kind of remember. Your parents would be happy. For their only son to grow into this handsome youth.”

Rachel put on a soft smile. Saying that she remembered seemed like she was saying that out of consideration, but Anderson couldn't stop the corner of his mouth from raising with just that.

It was the first time they had seen Anderson be this excited like a child. So Jo Minjoon could only get more curious. How outstanding could this person, Rachel Rose, be?

Rachel moved her steps. And her feet stopped right in front of Jo Minjoon. He couldn't even open his mouth and looked at her with an awkward face. She opened her mouth.

“I heard that you have an excellent ability.”

“.....Thank you.”

“I'm sorry to have come this suddenly. I felt hurried and I couldn't stand it.”

“Is there a reason for it?”

She couldn't just come here so hurriedly because he was a chef with an outstanding ability. Rachel opened her mouth, but closed it again. And after letting out a sigh, she looked at Jo Minjoon, and then at his chest. And after that, she closed her eyes and sighed again. Then, she slowly turned her head to look at the surrounding

cameras.

“Of course, I have a something to do. However, it will be difficult to bring it up in this public place. I only want to ask you one thing today. I know that you will feel excused, but can you answer me?”

“.....If it's not a difficult question.”

“It's simple. Your absolute sense of taste, are you certain that what you have is that?”

Rachel's eyes shined seriously. Jo Minjoon couldn't help but flinch at that moment. It was difficult to explain that what he possessed was the ability of the system, and not an absolute taste. However, it also wasn't true that he did have an absolute taste. Jo Minjoon slowly opened his mouth. He didn't want to have her as an enemy, so his voice also became gentler.

“An absolute sense of taste has never appeared until now. So i'm not certain as to what that is. And because of that, I can only be careful when someone asks me if I do have it. I can only feel the composition of the ingredients a little more clearly. That's the most correct answer I can give you.”

“.....Right. You will. I understand what you are talking about. Then, I will also change the question. I'm sorry. After getting older, I have just gotten stickier.”

Rachel smiled as if she was ashamed. And then, continued speaking.

“When you eat, how do you feel?”

Contrary to what he was expecting, Rachel asked him a not detailed question. Jo Minjoon fell in his thoughts. He didn't know why, but he wanted to give the sunbae in front of him a more correct answer. Perhaps, it wouldn't be the answer she would be expecting for, but at least he wanted to be more sincere than ever at this moment.

“First, I analyze. What's in it, how was it cooked, what's emphasized in. Enjoying the flavor comes after that.”

“.....So you can know all of the ingredients in the analysing phase, right?”

“Yes.”

That wasn't a lie. Rachel looked at him for a long while with a face he couldn't guess what she was thinking about. Her face was filled with a lot of emotions. Happiness, sadness, regret, sorrow..... Just as the amount of wrinkles in her face, those emotions were felt deeper and denser. Rachel wanted to say something with a teary face, but decided not to. And then, said in a low voice.

“.....right, if it's you, it may be possible.”

“Yes?”

“No, i'm sorry. Because of my age, I keep talking alone. Thank you for your answer. Keep devoting yourself. Until the day you become a single chef as a whole. You will probably become a good chef.”

“Me.”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. Then licked his lips after hesitating and asked with a wavering voice.

“Saying that I will become a good chef, is it because i’m sensitive in tasting?”

That was a really important question for him. He couldn’t just get happy when people praised him for his absolute sense of taste. Because there was a difference in the ability people thought he had, and reality. And because of that ‘You will succeed because you have your absolute taste.’ Those words couldn’t move him at all.

Rachel just looked at Jo Minjoon. Under her blonde hair, there were a lot of wrinkles under her eyes.

“Norimaki, I ate well. I think that it was a dish which your, and your teammates attitudes were buried. You all like cooking, right?”

Everyone nodded unconsciously. Rachel said.

“If you do like it, anyone can become a good chef. Because this world doesn’t betray hard work.”

—

“.....Blessed bastard.”

After the night business while they were on the road to return to Chicago, Anderson said. Jo Minjoon didn't talk back. Because Anderson had grumbled about this for more than ten times. Anderson seemed to be quite envious that Jo Minjoon received Rachel's attention. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

"You also talked quite long."

Even after Rachel had finished her business, they had talked for a while about this and that. Of course, it felt like it was because she was concerned of Jo Minjoon, but even so she wasn't the kind of person to ignore the sights of the youths that were passionate about cooking. Jo Minjoon just closed the heavy eye lids.

He was exhausted. The interest of the people, the responsibility as a team leader, all of those were making him feel heavy. Honestly speaking, when he got in charge of being the team leader, he had never thought that it would be this hard.

However, expressing that in front of other people felt too oppressive. No, it was uncertain calling it oppressive. Explaining it a little more precisely, it was closer to constraint. He had to do well so he didn't prejudice his team, he had to choose the location well, he had to design the menu well, had to suit their tastes, had to popularize it.

If you put it one by one separately, it would be a simple thing. However, when all of those were put together, his thoughts and responsibility could only get bigger.



Actually, it was mostly because he was the kind of person that felt a strong sense of responsibility. Normally, he would only leave it to destiny, do as he can, think like that. However, Jo Minjoon wanted to reach the destination with the boat he boarded with his teammates.

“Am I too greedy?”

“Huh? What?”

“No, it’s nothing.”

At Peter’s question, Jo Minjoon shook his head and replied. He looked at Peter. Now that he looked, it hasn’t even been one week since he was afraid of being edited in the broadcast, but compared to Peter of that time, he was showing quite a composed form. Maybe his sloppy advices had calmed his heart.

‘I only have to grow myself.’

Jo Minjoon smirked and looked outside the car’s window. They were leaving Madison and heading to Chicago. And Chloe’s and Hugo’s team would also be running there right now. The last day, everyone will work in the same place. That was what the director had planned for the last 7th day.

‘Will I be able to see Kaya again?’

He was also curious as to how Chloe and Hugo would be doing. Would they also be exhausted as a team leader like him? It was at that moment when he wanted to get some sleep. His handphone

vibrated and he lifted it. It was a message. That came from Kaya.

[ Kaya : When are you arriving? We already arrived. ]

[ Me : In about one hour. ]

[ Kaya : Look forward to it. Because I will end the likes of norikami. ]

This message that wasn't gentle at all, made her feel so girly. He felt like his pain was alleviated a little. Jo Minjoon replied back with a lighter mood.

[ Me : It's not norikami, but norimaki. ]

The reply came back immediately.

[ Kaya : It's an error. ]

[ Kaya : It's not that I didn't know. ]

[ Kaya : Ah. It's really not it. ]

[ Kaya : Do you think that there would be people that know it as norikami instead of norimaki? ]

[ Kaya : Are you ignoring me right now? ]

Jo Minjoon didn't reply back

## Chapter 64: At The End Of The Trip (1)

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When they arrived at Chicago, or more precisely at Grand Chef's house, it was already past midnight. It's obvious but there were no participants nor members of the broadcasting crew waiting for them. It was unavoidable. And also understandable. They would miss the faces of those they didn't see for a week, but that yearning was weak in front of sleep.

There was one thing in common they realized in the middle of the food truck mission. And that was that sleeping was sweeter than they had thought. They got up at dawn to do the groceries, prepare to cook, and sell. And cooking even after normal employees finishing hours, was the chef. Aside from the life's pattern, it was difficult to endure for your stamina.

And even the staff that were filming them were worn out. So how would the participants be feeling? It was obvious that everyone had to sleep at least a little more.

However Jo Minjoon couldn't. The insomnia that had followed him for the week, was more severe today. Maybe because it was the last day. In the end, Jo Minjoon stood up and went out to the lobby and then forced a laugh. There was a familiar face... no, familiar faces.

“Chloe. Hugo.”

“.....Minjoon? What are you doing at this hour.....?”

Hugo asked as if he was surprised and soon smirked. The

moment they saw each other's faces they knew. What had happened the last week, that the faces of the three were filled with exhaustion. Chloe laughed without strength.

“Minjoon, so you were the same.”

“Thanks. I thought that only I would be like this, but knowing that there were more companions in a bad situation calms my heart.”

“What do you mean with bad situation? That's too severe.”

Hugo didn't reply at Jo Minjoon's words and sat on the place. Perhaps they were conscious that they were all from different teams, but they were all separated from each other. Hugo said with a voice full of exaggerated confidence.

“Our team has prospect. A lot of prospect. So get prepared to get second place.”

“Ha, I don't know what confidence is that. Didn't you see the internet's reaction? Because of our food truck all of the other sushi stores sales are rising.”

“But that doesn't mean that you did better than us.”

Hugo and Jo Minjoon exchanged gazes. Chloe's sigh was heard silently.

“Stop it. Do you know that cats raise their fur when they are scared?”

“.....Now that I see, are you okay? I thought that you would only get a headache if I contacted you that time. You confronted a jerk

instead of Kaya.”

“It’s an obvious thing to do as the team leader. But, there are a lot of things a team leader should do. No, a lot of responsibilities. If only one week of mission is this much, how heavy would it be when we open our restaurants later?”

Jo Minjoon and Hugo didn’t reply. It was a question they didn’t even want to think about. However, if they kept walking this road, it was a weight they had to sometime confront. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“At that time, we will be able to resist. Because our necks will also get thicker.”

“I now know why tall people have stiff necks.”

Chloe laughed helplessly. Looking at those two, Hugo looked at his surroundings. Maybe it was because Grand Chef’s house was empty for a week, but the cameras that should have been installed in the lobby couldn’t be seen. Hugo opened his mouth with a cautious voice.

“Your.....sales, no, your profit, how much is it?”

“Are you crazy? You want me to share that with the other team?”

“What about it? It doesn’t say anything about sharing in the rules.”

“Even so.....”

Chloe said with a hesitating voice. Her voice was always bright, but normally it didn’t have courage. She wouldn’t like sharing

these kind of things. Hugo said with a gentle voice.

“Because we share this between us, doesn’t mean that we are doing something bad. It’s only to comfort ourselves. I will say honestly. Even if I know it in advance and sleep, I want to go to sleep after I get properly discouraged. And it would be the same for you.”

“.....If your results weren’t good, I think that you wouldn’t want to hear it.”

“If it was like that, I will probably work harder tomorrow. That would be better.”

Chloe looked at the floor for a long while without saying anything. It was at that moment when Hugo wanted to say something again. Chloe’s lips opened.

—

That night, Jo Minjoon could properly sleep in a week. The boundaries of dawn and morning. The moment he got out of his room to go to the shower with a disheveled face, he heard a familiar voice.

“.....You ignored me yesterday?”

As morning came, the first voice he heard was from no other than Kaya. Since when was it? Kaya that was leaning next to his room’s door glared at him. Jo Minjoon smiled brightly.

“You woke up early?”

“Woke up early? So you are saying that you thought nothing at all about making me look stupid that can’t even differentiate norimaki with norikami?”

“Did you have breakfast? And the others got up?”

“.....Are you changing subjects?”

Kaya said as if she was flabbergasted. Jo Minjoon pointed his hair and said.

“Don’t you see how I look right now? Let me wash for now.”

He thought that while he was taking the shower she would go somewhere else, but even after roughly twenty minutes, she was still in the same place. Only then did Jo Minjoon get bewildered. It was the first time she had followed him like this.

“.....Are you like this because of what happened yesterday?”

“A wrongdoer is always the calm one. I really knew about it.”

“Yes. Just say so.”

“No, don’t say it, but it is like that. Are you also ignoring me because I am stupid and couldn’t learn?”

Kaya’s eyes shook. Rather than being angry, she seemed to be a little nervous. And only then did Jo Minjoon realize that yesterday’s minor action could have touched Kaya’s trauma.

“I don’t ignore you. Is there a person that ignores their friends?”

Kaya that wanted to reply back, closed her mouth at the word friend. Her face became complicated. Just like she had told to Martin a while ago, she didn't like the word friend that much. Precisely speaking, she didn't believe that friendship existed between people.

And of course, Jo Minjoon couldn't know that far. He yawned and moved his feet. Kaya hurriedly chased his back.

“What is it? Why are you just leaving? I didn't finish talking.”

“I'm sorry. I can't reply because I'm sleepy. Let's eat breakfast first. You promised me when I teamed up with you, that if I helped you would cook breakfast for me everyday. After that, you used to cook for me for a few days, but then you stopped doing so?”

“...That's because people made fun of me.”

“And would they not make fun of you because you stopped making it for me? We are already marked as their teasing material.”

Kaya matched his steps with a discontent face, and then looked at his face. It had only been one week since they saw each other, but his face was really a mess. Kaya said with a sullen voice.

“You became like this just because of the food truck? For a man to be this weak. How are you going to get in charge of the restaurant?”

“Yeah. Should I do some exercise?”

“Men should have muscles. You have to at least be like Arnold



Schwarzenegger to be considered a man.”

“.....That’s not a man but a male.”

Jo Minjoon shook his head with a face he seemed to be sick of it. Kaya’s gaze got sharper and said.

“Anyways, do some exercise. Chloe should also had it hard, but because of her stamina she didn’t collapse like you.”

“.....It seems like Chloe endured well?”

“Chloe is Chloe.”

I wonder. Looking at her last night, it didn’t seem like she was that comfortable. Jo Minjoon held back the words he wanted to say and went to the countertop. Kaya pouted her lower lips.

“Are you really planning to make me do everything? I’m also tired.”

“Make me something simple, like omelette. You don’t need to have two people for that. Oh, instead of omelette, make a spanish one. With some potatoes in it. Not too spicy and not too salty. And I want the exterior to be the least seared possible. Instead, I will cut the fruits.”

“.....There’s so much you ask for.”

Even while letting out a sigh, she made the omelette with all of her concentration. She even beat the eggs with care. She cooked the beaten eggs along with onions, and put some thin potatoes inside of it.

In conclusion, it was a delicious flavor. Because the potatoes were cooked beforehand, it didn't smell bad, and the right amount of butter brought out the delicious flavor of the egg.

It felt soft, and the potatoes that were chewed were also sleek. The beaten eggs weren't cooked enough, but maybe because of that it was felt like a sauce and it felt good. It was a spanish omelette that well followed the standards.

“Why isn't there an opinion?”

“Not talking means that it's good. Normally when people eat something delicious, they don't talk much.”

“So the dishes the judges had said that it was delicious should all have been fake.”

“.....That's because they have to evaluate. It's different with this.”

“I also need an evaluation. What score is it?”

At those words, Jo Minjoon coughed as if he was choking. The kindness of Kaya patting his back couldn't be seen. And in the end, only after a long while did he look at Kaya with teary eyes.

“You are also asking me the score now? You didn't use to.”

“I thought that I would slowly ask you. Everyone else does but only I don't, so it's a bit weird.”

“.....Honestly, if it's your sense of taste, you don't need the evaluation of another.”

“I'm also the sensitive kind, but I'm not able to get 20 ingredients right like you. Maybe I should be able to get 15. In the first place,

how do you know that my tongue is sensitive?”

“You know if we get along together.”

He couldn't reply that it was because he knew that her tasting level was 10. Kaya looked at him with a weird face.

“So what score is it? Is it maybe not good?”

“No. Your dish, is an average 7. If you do well a lot of 8 comes out.”

“.....Hmm, is it?”

In Kaya's face, a faint smile appeared. She nodded as if she was satisfied. Jo Minjoon glanced at his surroundings. It was already morning, but nobody had appeared yet.

“Are they all sleeping?”

“Like you want to get strength with eating breakfast, they should want to sleep a little more to get strength. Originally, I should have done that too.”

“So because of me, you are suffering when originally you wouldn't?”

“Why, now you don't only want breakfast, but also lip service?”

“If you wish?”

“I won't. Because of you, I'm doing this at this hour.”

Kaya said with her usual rough voice and put the omelette in her mouth. At that moment, her expression got relieved. Looking at the satisfying smile in her mouth, Jo Minjoon smiled as if he was

flabbergasted.

“It’s also rare for someone to eat the dish they had made deliciously.”

“Why? The flavor doesn’t fall just because it’s a dish I made.”

“It was like that for me. It’s more delicious the dishes of others than the ones I make myself.”

“It’s because you didn’t live with lacking something. You should know that even having ingredients to cook is happiness.”

“...Now you sound just like my mother.”

Kaya pouted her lips as if something was wrong with that, and continued to concentrate on eating. She had the tendency to put importance in cooking and eating.

Maybe she wasn’t nervous about the mission that was soon going to happen. Jo Minjoon was rather amazed with that Kaya. She was weak in some aspects, but strong in others.

“Aren’t you nervous? Soon, the food truck mission is going to start.”

“What’s there to be nervous about? If our team does get last place, you just have to survive in the disqualifying mission.”

“That’s true... but the probabilities get on your nerves.”

“A girl that has nothing to do in the market to come all the way here, and surviving in the disqualifying mission. Don’t you think that there’s nothing to think about thinking at which side has less probability? And you, looking at your face it seems that during the past week you lost all your strength.”

It seemed like she was saying it just because so, but her voice wasn't so dull as not to notice the worry hidden in those words. Jo Minjoon smiled softly.

"I'm okay now."

"Coming now? Feeling more burdened today isn't the normal thing?"

".....Can I tell you honestly?"

"So can you tell me fakely?"

"I don't think that i'm getting last place."

At his words, Kaya's face became confused. She asked as if she couldn't understand.

"So after working hard for one week, you suddenly think that today you won't get disqualified? Without any reason?"

"Do you need a reason? The feeling is important. I think that I won't get last place. It's just my feeling."

"So who do you think will get last place?"

Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly. He thought of the income he had talked about with Hugo and Chloe last night. First, Jo Minjoon's team was \$5,700, and Chloe's team had \$50 more than them. Lastly.....

"It isn't you and I, so only one remains."

Hugo’s team income didn’t surpass \$5,000.

## Chapter 65: At The End Of The Trip (2)

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The time for comfort ended immediately. Even before it became 9 o'clock, the participants had to go in front of the food truck. They didn't even have the leisure to express that they were glad to see each other in a long while. After they attached a mic in their clothes, the judges appeared. They had met almost in one week. Joseph opened his mouth with a calm face.

“Last week, did you do well?”

The participants laughed bitterly. Their faces were saying it all. Joseph slacked his lips as if he understood.

“It should have been hard. You lacked sleep, and your back and neck hurt. But looking at the smiles of the customers you can't even say that you are exhausted, that's the life of a chef. And your lives should also be like that. The last one week, you can look at it as you have to work the same for the remaining 70 years.”

Perhaps, because it was the food truck that it was more comfortable. Because it wasn't a normal one, but a food truck only for the sake of the mission. Normal restaurants would be better in that you don't have to move, but excluding that, it wasn't easy at all.

Alan opened his mouth.

“Later, you will be facing more stress than right now. It will be different depending on who you are working for, but as you know

the character of most of the head chefs or sous chefs are dirty. And I'm not blaming them. It can only get dirty. It can only get rough. Because if you did even a small mistake, you won't know what could happen. And what you place on the dish has to be checked as cautiously as a doctor's hands. And.....”

Because if you did even a small mistake, you won't know what could happen. What you placed on the dish has to be checked as cautiously as a doctor's hands. And...”

Alan glanced at Emily.

“If epicureans come and comment on the internet or the news saying things full of crap, you will forget why you were walking this road. Some of them will write unreasonable things, and things that make you wonder their comprehension towards cooking.”

“.....Well, even I sigh when I look at those epicureans. And it seems like you had already met sloppy epicureans in the food truck mission.”

The ones Emily was talking about weren't the ones who talked bad about their cooking, because that was their obvious right. However, there were also some that wanted to get attention by speaking nonsense. They said that the flavor of an ingredient that wasn't even used was felt strongly, and some even evaluated with the opinions of those, when they haven't even eaten it.

“Minjoon. Hugo. Chloe. Because you were team leaders, you should have felt and endured more things than your members. How are you feeling?”



Jo Minjoon glanced at Hugo. Maybe he was forcing himself, but he didn't look good. He could only be like that. Because if he didn't lie about his profits, today's third place would be his team. Hugo wasn't the type to lie about these things, he was the type to feel all the more responsible in this kind of situation.

The first one who replied was Chloe. She seemed to also be feeling at ease. Her voice wasn't that heavy.

"It was hard, but thinking about the things you would face in the future, it was quite a good experience."

"It's a wonderful reply. Minjoon?"

"The word responsibility seemed to be more scary than I expected. Of course, I knew that you made me team leader as a reward for getting first in the risotto mission, but it felt more like I was given a test."

He hadn't planned to grumble, but as he spoke, it became more of a nuance. Alan smirked.

"Think of it as an experience. Cooking in the seat of the leader is something impossible with your current experience."

"Yes, I know it quite well."

"Hugo, What about you? You have the most nervous expression among the three."

Hugo smiled bitterly. He hesitated for a while and slowly opened his mouth.

“I’m sorry for my teammates. I had to do well as a team leader, but I had to be a team leader that lacked too much.”

“.....I wonder. I had heard that you did quite well, so I don’t think that there’s a need to lower yourself like that.”

“Rather than lowering myself.....I’m sorry. It seems like I was too nervous.”

“Cheer up.”

Emily said with a gentle voice. Next was Joseph. He pointed at the clock in the wall with his finger.

“The business today will start until 4:30. And, the profits at that moment will be the standard to evaluate. The winners today were going to have a meal at the 1 star Michelin restaurant ‘Coconut Prime’..... But because of a patron, the plans were changed. The place you are going to eat today.....”

At this moment, Alan looked at Jo Minjoon for a moment. Even before they could think the meaning of that sight, Alan continued speaking.

“It’s in Rose Island located in Chicago. It’s a place that got a Michelin 3 star.”

At those words, everyone’s mouths opened widely. At that moment, Jo Minjoon felt a strong desire to win. Michelin 3 star. The meaning those words had wasn’t ordinary. Perhaps...

‘.....Would there be a 10 star dish?’

His heart started to beat. There was only \$50 of difference with Chloe's Team. If he worked desperately, maybe they will overturn them. Personally after his absolute sense of taste was known by everybody, thinking that the profits yesterday was higher than usual maybe they would also get good results today.

“Do the best you can. Not everybody can win, but you will all be able to satisfy your customers. I hope that you will be able to.”

At those words, Hugo's face froze stiff. It seemed like he had pledged something inwardly. Jo Minjoon thought while calming down his greed. Yes, first came the customers. It wasn't only selling, but making food that satisfied the customers. He couldn't forget about that for even a moment.

Joseph said, “Go. The customers will be waiting for you.”

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Now, they didn't even take long getting the ingredients in the market. They had gotten the hang of it, but it was mostly because they had already visited Chicago's market once.

They had decided to cook first with the rice as usual. He had already repeated this process many times, but it was the most important and difficult part. Rice was a dish that was difficult to cook well. Korean housewives cook rice everyday, but the results always varied. At times it was well-cooked, and at others it was watery.

Perhaps it was fine because they had the rice cooker that kept the quality. But if they didn't, you wouldn't know what the result will be. You would only get accustomed because you ate it everyday, but cooking rice wasn't an easy thing to do.

“How many will we sell today?”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. It was still in Chicago, but this place was 2km away from the last place. So he thought that not too many customers would come twice. And even if they did, it meant that they came to eat their norimaki again.

And he couldn't neglect the effect of the absolute taste. At least taking into account the selling they, he thought that there won't be a time where they didn't have customers. The problem was them. How fast could they make the norimaki according to the demand? And today, the other teams seemed to also extend the business hour.

“The mission ends at 4:30. So should we make 1,500 until then?”

“...Just listening to it makes me feel disgusted. Do you think that it will all sell? If it doesn't we will only be wasting ingredient fees.”

“So we will have to act according to the situation. But I think that the total amount of customers will be higher than usual. Because it's different to having only one truck to having all three in the same place.”

Anderson nodded as if he agreed. If it was only one, the people who were hesitating about moving to get there. If there were

three, then the possibility for them to lift their butts became higher.

Whether they made 1,000 or 2,000, in the end they could make 300 in one time. It was the same work as usual, but Jo Minjoon felt more comfortable. Perhaps it was because of what Hugo had told him. No, it was almost certain that it was because of that. Because he could sleep well in a long while because of that.

As he made the first round of norimakis, Jo Minjoon started to cook the rice immediately. The one that opened the door this time was Anderson. He, who got out of the back door, couldn't help but feel shocked at the amazing crowd. Saying that the square was full would be exaggerating..... But at least, there were so many people you couldn't see the end of them. Some hundred would be too light to say. He got back in the truck and gasped in amazement.

“.....We should really be able to sell a thousand. There are a lot of people.”

“Right?”

The first ones to started selling were obviously Chloe's team, because they had to prepare the bread beforehand and put it on the grill or skewer on the kochi. There were three options the customers could choose from: bread, meat, and sauce. It was simple, but certainly this was a method which could bring many customers.

The price was around \$4-\$6. Taking into account that vegetables weren't put in it separately, it wasn't that cheap, but even so the

amount made people to not complain.

It wasn't as much as norimaki, but even so it was a dish that was fast to cook. Joanne said with an anxious voice.

“Why are they so fast? That Kaya roasts meat like an art. In that fast time, there's not one meat that's overcooked or raw.”

“She's from the market, so she would have lots of experience.”

“Whew... scary. Let's strain ourselves too.”

If Chloe's team raised awareness that much, Hugo's' team was the opposite. It was one thing that their line didn't shorten, but the size of their line was really short compared to Jo Minjoon's and Chloe's teams. It couldn't be helped.

Coffee and cake. Normally, it was a menu that was more appealing to women rather than men. And right now, the people that were lined up were mostly women. It was really hard to look for a man.

Losing male customers wasn't the only fault of their menu. First, the point that it was a dessert added to that. Of course, there wouldn't be people that wanted to get full with only eating cake, but their cake was focused in quality rather than quantity. The price was expensive and the amount wasn't much. The quality would be assured as long as there was Marco, but honestly, you wouldn't know it before eating it. Because basically, when you look at the menu you would 'ugh'ed and stepped back.

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. It was regretful, but he didn't have the leisure to be thinking about them. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Kaya's team.....no. There's no need to mind Chloe's Team much. They will feel desperate looking at us. Because they don't have time to be resting. Oh, yes. Welcome. I will take your order.”

“Two pork barbecues and one salmon. I saw the broadcast well. Looking at you guessing at the fried tofu pocket, I felt chills down my spine.”

“Thank you.”

Honestly, he had heard that many times already. However, he could not smile back when the customer was putting a face that was having fun. He heard the same congratulations, thanked the same way, and laughed the same way. The special thing was that he didn't hate that conversation to be repeated. Because their faces were filled with goodwill towards him, he couldn't hate them.

After making norimaki and selling, and repeating that process, it was soon near 4:30. The comforting point was that until it became 4:30, they didn't rest even once. The line in Hugo's team disappeared slowly, and the selling speed of Kaya's team decreased..... Perhaps, they would really...

‘No. Let's not expect already.’

However, he couldn't help but have a smile in his face. And the cameraman was filming his face with a careful angle. Probably, that face was going to be shown as if he was having fun with the

customers, and a smile of a chef.

When more customers were getting out of that place, the length of the lines could be clearly compared. The longest one was Jo Minjoon's Team. It wasn't simply because they wanted to eat norimaki. Most of the customers that saw the absolute taste scene felt that that broadcast made the person himself as a unique brand. Martin touched his chin and thought.

‘Aside from victory, Minjoon got wings in his back.’

Even with making normal food, the people found a flavor that wasn't even in it and praise them. Of course, some epicureans would overdo it like always, but taking into account Jo Minjoon's absolute taste, it wasn't that easy to bad mouth.

Much less when Jo Minjoon's cooking skill wasn't bad at all. On top of that, he was only 23. Honestly speaking, you wouldn't know how much he would grow.

When it became 4:30, there were not many norimakis remaining. Just as the word, there wasn't much. 7. Jo Minjoon gave it all away for free to the customers. He couldn't charge them because the business was until 4:30.

The kimbaps they made and sold were roughly 1,100. It was a really amazing number. Normally if he summed up lunch and dinner and sold all that, even if they worked for longer than usual they had really sold a lot.



‘Excluding the oil and ingredient fees..... It will be a little more than \$1,000.’

If they could do business like this everyday, all the chefs would become owners of a food truck.

The participants returned to the Grand Chef’s house. They couldn’t announce the results where other people were looking. Of course, the food truck had already spoiled about the survivors, but it was an unavoidable decision because of the mission. If it wasn’t that situation, there was no need to show the progress.

Lobby. The judges were standing as usual and waiting for them. Alan opened his mouth.

“We have the total profit from each team leader. And the losers and winner have also been decided. The funny thing, is the difference between the 1st and 2nd place. How much of a difference do you think there will be? Chloe, what do you think?”

“.....I wonder? Hmm, about \$10?”

“It’s half of that. That’s the difference of the 1st and 2nd place.”

At those words, everyone started to talk with surprised faces. Jo Minjoon felt his chest burning. Who would be the winner of those 5 dollars? Him? Or Chloe?

Alan opened his mouth.

“However, before announcing the 1st place, we have to first name

the disqualifying team. It's an inconvenient time, but a time we must have. I won't talk long. The losers today have acquired a total of \$5,643 of profit. Right. Hugo! It's your team."

Hugo was shaking with his face having turned pale. Alan didn't want to say consoling words. He said with a blunt voice.

"Even the idea of doing a cafe truck was a miss. First, your skills of making coffee is not that good. I don't understand why you have chosen to go that way. Second, you had to think about the size of this truck. Was making bread and coffee all you could think about after knowing that this huge truck could handle 15 people? Perhaps making a moving bakery would have been better than cake. In my opinion, you were so charmed by the idea of doing a 'cafe truck' that your horizons became small. Hugo, what do you think about that?"

".....It's my mistake. I have nothing to say."

Marco slowly patted Hugo's shoulder. Joseph just looked at them and opened his mouth.

"If you want to open a restaurant, you have to take into account many things. It's not only the item or the cooking that should be good. You can't go with just that. That's only the basics. With that said, the other teams did really well. They figured out the location and peculiarity, and I could see from the menu that a versatile strategy was used."

Joseph took a breath for a moment. And then said.

“The first place got \$6,771 of profit. Yes, that’s right.”

Silence roamed for a moment. The moment Jo Minjoon heard \$6,771 he immediately knew the result. He could see the Michelin 3 star right in front of his eyes.

“Congratulations, Minjoon. Your team won.”

# Chapter 66: Temptation Of A Three Star (1)

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Michelin. And a three star on top of that. How much sweetness did that word have? It wasn't pleasant thinking about Hugo's Team that had to do the disqualifying mission, but even so, he felt more flustered rather than disappointment.

Alan said with a dry voice.

“The winning team shall move immediately. You will have food already waiting for you. Enjoy tonight comfortably. You have the right to.”

Jo Minjoon glanced at Hugo's Team. They were forcing themselves to put on a calm face, but nobody could hide the disappointment. He wanted to cheer for them, but honestly even if he did, he wouldn't stop feeling uneasy. Jo Minjoon turned his back without saying anything and walked back, his team members slowly following his back.

When he got out to the parking, the food truck they have come with had already disappeared. Anderson mumbled with a helpless voice.

“It's gone. The truck.”

“Weird. Why do I keep feeling regret?”

It felt the same as graduating from school. Looking at the empty parking lot, a familiar voice was heard.

“Congratulations. Honestly, I wasn’t certain when I heard that it was norimaki, but in the end you did it.”

“...Why are you here? Don’t you have to be together with the disqualifying mission’s team?”

“The main PD should always be in the most important places. And the place I have to be right now...”

Martin slowly extended the index finger from his fist. And what that finger was pointing was Jo Minjoon.

“Is this place.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t refute. He could vaguely tell what Martin was thinking about. And the restaurant they were going to was no other than Rose Island. And the owner of that Rose Island had already come to look for him yesterday. The young chef receiving the expectations of Rachel Rose, the one that had an absolute sense of taste.

That chef was going to Rose Island right now. Martin thinking that the picture was good wasn’t overdoing it. Joanne said with her voice shaking.

“Wasn’t this a reward? When we eat there, do we also have to be surrounded by cameras? I would feel so burdened that I won’t feel like eating at all.”

“If that’s the case, you can remain and rest in your room.”

“No, who said that I would be resting? Why are you acting like

this? So scary.”

Joanne pouted her lips and grumbled. Ivanna looked at Joanne and asked.

“Should I bring some food for you?”

“No, I said that I was going. Why are you also like this?”

At Joanne’s grumbling, Ivanna’s corner of the mouth raised and laughed. Martin coughed. A van that was coated in black slowly approached them.

“It will take at least 30-40 minutes to get to the restaurant. Be prepared.”

“Prepared for what?”

Martin smirked

“To face the best dish in your lives.”

—

Martin said that the meal in Rose Island would be an unforgettable experience, and Jo Minjoon too agreed with that. However, could it get to become the best of his life? He wasn't sure. Of course, getting three Michelin stars was the last step a restaurant could reach. However, just because there's nothing higher than that, means that it could really become perfect? Was a perfect dish like that really possible? He wasn't as confident as before in front of that question.

However, could it really become the best of his life?

“.....What are you going to choose for the menus?”

“Obviously the recommended one. If you didn't come much, that's the best option.”

Anderson replied as if there was nothing else to think about. Peter, that was searching in the internet, said.

“I looked for it and it says that there are two representing courses, a plant-oriented course and an animal-oriented course.”

“This is obviously animal.”

“I also like meat.”

At Joanne's and Ivanna's words, Jo Minjoon too nodded without saying anything. He wasn't particularly attached to meat, but even so, the abundant flavor between a dish that had meat and one that didn't had too big of a difference. But of course, thinking of the reputation, the dishes that used vegetables should also be outstanding, but they thought that it wouldn't be the best. Jo Minjoon asked.

“What do customers react to more?”

“It's obviously the animal one. A course cooking with no meat is too boring.”

“Then I will go with that.”

As they were talking expectantly like kids, soon, Rose Island's building was right in front of them. It was a building that was made by piled light brown bricks. There were five floors, but the height of each floor was so high it made it look like a 7-floor building. Jo Minjoon mumbled as he got out of the van.

“.....All of those floors shouldn't be restaurants, right?”

“Thinking about things like serving, it would be difficult to do so in this kind of building. But you wouldn't know if you had an elevator for the dishes. In the first place, in a building this big, it's really difficult to even take the orders.”

“That's also true. Anderson, how was your restaurant? Looking at how you are talking it seems to be single floored, but how many tables were there?”

“Fifty. As they shared the work between them, it was the limit they could do.”

“And who's the head chef among them?”



“That’s a company’s secret.”

Anderson smirked and replied. Looking at Anderson acting like that, Jo Minjoon could only get more curious. There couldn’t be two head chefs in one kitchen. It was normally like that. So a married couple had to avoid being a superior of the other. What kind of relationship could that couple have?

He couldn’t know the answer to that right now. Rather than being more curious about Anderson’s parents, he was much more curious about the dishes they were going to see and try.

“Welcome. I will guide you.”

Even at first glance, a server so pretty it brightened the surrounding was taking them into their table. Ignoring an ugly person would be falling low, but feeling well-disposed to someone pretty was an unavoidable instinct.

After the server guided them to their round table, she took the orders and left. Jo Minjoon looked at her back dumbfoundedly. If the servers that were walking looked this good, he felt that the status of the dish he didn’t try yet had already risen. Jo Minjoon mumbled.

“What are the employees doing here instead of being models?”

“They also talked about that a lot. That the employees here seemed to be all mo.....dels.

The voice of Peter that was replying shook. Five servers approached, and after exchanging glances, they put down the five dishes almost at the same time. This was the service of a luxurious restaurant. Although they didn't know what meaning it had, they clearly felt that they were getting treated.

But what they cared more rather than the service was in the dish, no, in the plate. The four kinds of amuse bouche that was on the dish seemed excellent, but even so, it took their attention. It was unavoidable. That plate... was so special that it made you wonder if it should be called a plate. It was a piece of wood. A piece of wood with the exterior a little burnt. Jo Minjoon asked to the server in charge of them. It was a woman server with a dense blonde hair and a hooked nose. Her name was Elly.

“The plate is really peculiar?”

“We took out a plank of a whisky barrel and burnt it a little.”

“Oh..... It's good.”

Jo Minjoon lifted the plate and sniffed it. It certainly had the aroma of whisky, and the burn aroma that came from the plank also made him feel good. Elly served champagne henriot in his cup. It was dry white wine. He opened his mouth again.

“There are four kinds here, so is there a order to eat?”

“You can eat it however you please.”

Elly smiled gently and replied. Jo Minjoon, too, smiled brightly and turned his sight to the dish. There were people who were embarrassed to ask things in a restaurant. For example, thinking

that it was ignorance asking about the characteristic of the part of the steak. However, Jo Minjoon thought that there was no way to be like that. Even more if he was suppressing the curiousness in front of these peculiar things, then that person couldn't enjoy the culture of the restaurant properly.

“Minjoon. Are you confident in getting all of the ingredients right this time too?”

At Joanne's question, Jo Minjoon's corner of his mouth raised. It wasn't because he was confident, but he felt that it was funny that maybe the chefs of this place wouldn't even care about his evaluation.

Jo Minjoon looked at the amuse bouche that was on the plate. It wasn't the name of the dish. But the name of the role. It had the role to raise the flavor in one's mouth by making it bite size, and it was a different thing to appetizer. First, amuse bouche wasn't included in the menu. It was a service by the decision of the chefs, and to call it appetizer, it's size was too small.

But just because of that it didn't mean that amuse bouche was just any dish. Jo Minjoon gulped. The first thing that caught his attention was a yellow gougère. It's appearance was the simplest of the four. At first glance, it seemed to be a chou cream bread, but this thing the size of a marble had a coriander leaf on top. However, the reason that it attracted his attention was because the cooking score was 9. He felt thirsty just by looking at that score.

Jo Minjoon didn't hesitate and put the gougère on his mouth. Its exterior was soft but at the same time rough, and as it exploded the

cheese that was inside flowed. The cheese wasn't so salty and was tasty. After that, the aroma of the coriander flowed through his tongue and directed to his throat. And unexpectedly, in that thin exterior, a banana's aroma could be felt. It wasn't that it had a banana syrup, probably they had put in dried banana powder in the dough.

It was the first time he tried gougère. However, if all of the gougères had this flavor, he felt that he wouldn't be able to endure it if he didn't eat this everyday. The flavor was so deep and clear it made you think like this, and at the same time it was light. It was a flavor that made you think that this dish didn't have cheese in it.

Jo Minjoon looked down at the dish dumbfoundedly. Why was this little thing so delicious? It was to the point that he regretted having tried it. It was so delicious it made you feel despair because it ended with just one bite. Jo Minjoon glanced at Anderson's dish that was next to him. In his dish, it still had the gougère left. Anderson slightly put his arm between them.

“Your sight is dangerous.”

“...You are mistaken.”

Jo Minjoon grumbled and looked again at his dish. There were still three pieces left in his amuse bouche. He directed his spoon to a slice of orange that had a half transparent orange coating. Even if he didn't eat it, he could know what it was wrapped with. It was dried paprika coating. Simply put, it was wrapping caramelized dried paprika on the orange.

Because it was 8 points, it lacked flavor compared to the 9 points. He thought like that. The moment it entered his mouth, the first thing he felt was the aroma of the burn plank. But the moment he took a bite of it, Jo Minjoon moaned unconsciously. It was delicious, even more so than before. Actually, even if it was a 9-point dish, basically, he didn't like a dish that had cheese as its main point. But, this slice of orange was different. The coating crumbled and from it he could feel the sweet and clear flavor of dried paprika, and after that, the juice of it followed.

And at that moment, he had his eyes tear up unconsciously. The flavor was wonderful. If you saw some comic books, when people ate something delicious they tended to think of the back of a lady wearing a straw hat, or a plain or a cliff. It was a flavor that made him understand what that meant. He felt that it was too charming and perfect to express the flavor simply as the orange's flavor and paprika's flavor sweet and sour flavor. It didn't make you doubt even if it got 9 points. It was that much.

Jo Minjoon let out a breath and leaned his back on the chair. He was exhausted. It was only two bites, but the flavor those two bites left was too strong and shocking. However, he couldn't back out like this. There were still two enemies left. Ivanna asked.

“Minjoon, if you aren't going to eat that.....”

“I am.”

Jo Minjoon replied with determination and fixed his posture. Ivanna bit her fingers as if it was regretful. Jo Minjoon looked at the third dish.

“.....Is it black lime?”

Black lime was famous as a dish from the middle east. You slightly simmered lime in salt, and dry it in the sun until it became brown, and inside the dried texture, the original sour flavor was condensed to the maximum. The flavor in itself was good, but it was also an ingredient that was used in many dishes.

On top of the thinly sliced black lime, there was a saffron purée and a kind of anise hyssop herb. He hesitated for a moment because he thought that the sour flavor was going to be strong, but the previous two dishes made him have courage. And that courage wasn't brute at all. Until it got inside of his mouth he didn't feel much, but once he chewed it the sour flavor of the lime, and the saffron's and anise hyssop's refreshing flavor filled his mouth. Compared to the slice of orange he ate before, he got less moved, but he felt like the flavor that was roaming in his mouth couldn't get better. Because right now, his salivary glands were excreting abundant amounts of saliva.

It was a bit regretful that he had to erase the faint aroma in his mouth, but just because of that he couldn't leave alone the next dish. Jo Minjoon looked at the last adversary. On top of the roll snack that had a crunchy texture was placed a beautiful green cream. He didn't even need to look at the system, and put it on his mouth. And the apple's flavor, along with the aroma of a unfamiliar herb came into his mouth. According to the system, it seemed to be a leaf from a 'hierba santa', but it was the first time he had heard of it.

But there was no need to point out that it was unfamiliar. The

flavor was excellent. Along the crunchy wheat snack, the cream's flavor and aroma that was on top of it made him not able to stand it anymore. It was a dish which you could feel the status in it. Jo Minjoon looked absentmindedly at the empty plate, the wood plank. It was so delicious that it made you happy, so rather he felt uneasy. If a cooking can be this delicious, and if it could reach this state. However, it wasn't the time to worry about that.

Because the appetizer didn't even start yet.

## Chapter 67: Temptation Of A Three Star (2)

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He couldn't see the recipe, because the recipes the system showed you were only those which cooking levels were lower than his tasting level. And since all of the dishes were 8-9 points, it was still difficult for him to do so.

As he looked around him, the other four seemed to be feeling the same thing. If they had a normal sense of taste, it was a flavor they couldn't hate at all. If the amuse bouche was this much, then how much would the dishes that were going to come next be? You could vaguely guess the level of a restaurant with its first dish. If it kept coming like this, then they would really be able to try the best meal of their lives. Joanne said with an absent-minded voice.

“Anderson, even so you should be accustomed to it?”

“To what?”

“Your parent's restaurant, they say that it's also a three star Michelin restaurant. Shouldn't you at least be more trained with this kind of stimulation?”

“Wait, what are you talking about? Anderson's parents were owners of a three star restaurant?”

Jo Minjoon said with a shocked expression and looked at Anderson. It was something he had never heard of before. However, the reply didn't come back because the next dish was coming. Originally, these kind of restaurants focused on not cutting the flow. After eating the amuse bouche, it wasn't surprising for the next dish to come.



The first thing they saw was a round caviar, [Ossetra caviar](#). It was the kind that was normally eaten more. In the floor of the plate, there was mayo lemon custard spread, and on top of that a [kumquat](#) jam. And a soap berry that was simmered in sugar water, sea weed, and chive oil was placed on top of it.

Honestly speaking this dish moved him less than the previous dishes. The cooking score was 8, and the harmony of the seasoning was also bad, but it wasn't the problem. The moment he ate the caviar, he wasn't quite accustomed to the unique aroma that was spread. Honestly speaking, he felt it a little fishy.

‘.....Honestly, i'm not an epicurean yet.’

Jo Minjoon glanced at the others. In the case of Anderson and Peter they were eating it quite deliciously, but Joanne and Ivanna, after eating a little they started to eat the jam or the custard. Of course, as he was cleansing his mouth, Martin slightly asked.

“How is it? Minjoon. Would you be able to score it?”

“.....Martin. Even so, I think that it would be too rude to score after coming here.”

“Ey, it's an obvious right of the customer, so what about it?”

“Even if I'm a customer, at the same time I'm their junior.”

“Nowadays, the other chefs also evaluate a dish by going to another restaurants. Just do it once. Look, the chefs over there seem to be quite expecting.”

Martin pointed at the kitchen that was at the side of the

restaurant. Maybe it was an open style, but the scenery of the kitchen could be clearly seen from the hall. The man that seemed to be the head chef was looking at them with his arms crossed. Martin pushed the back of a staff that was next to him.

“Go and ask to the head chef if it bothers him if he scores his dish.”

The reply that came back was ‘It doesn’t. Rather I wanted to ask you to do so.’ In the end, Jo Minjoon could only let out a sigh and name the scores.

“They are all 8 points. Excluding one. The gougere that was in the amuse bouche. That was a 9. However, the most delicious thing for me was the paprika orange.”

“Oh, now that I see, it wasn’t the score of the food, but the cooking score.”

“Yes. Getting this score when the main dish didn’t even come out yet means that the chef’s skills are excellent. It was a really good dish.”

Right after he finished talking, the next dish appeared. Coconut milk rice pudding, with ice that was frozen in the shape of a pipe on top of it. And inside the ice was grapefruit, caramelised grapefruit peel and basil, trout eggs, and roasted coconut and pistachio. There were also ingredients he was pleased to see. Roast grain powder was slightly spread on top of the rice pudding.

And the ice wasn’t an ordinary one. It was made by freezing ginger water. It had a shape only modern dishes could have. Jo

Minjoon admired it for a moment, and got confused. He didn't get how he should be eating this. Their server in charge, Elly, said in a soft voice.

“It's a dish you have to break the ice cylinder and mix the contents of it and eat it.”

“Oh, understood.”

The moment he broke the ice, he felt regret but he could do nothing about it. When the dish got broke like a mess and mixed, his task would be completed.

9 points. It was the second 9 points dish. And contrary to the gougere, it didn't have unfamiliar ingredients in it. A flavor which you let out sighs of admirations while you ate it. No, a flavor you didn't even have the leisure to feel admiration.

As the ice melted and the aroma of the ginger spread in his mouth, on top of that, the trout eggs melted in his tongue stingingly. The grapefruit's sour flavor met with the rice pudding and the melted coconut cream that was inside of it. That flavor felt just like mojito and it moderately brought a delicious flavor that livened the mood.

It was at that moment when Martin tried to slightly ask. Jo Minjoon raised his hand.

“I'm begging you, don't ask me those questions right now. After, you can after I finish. Then I will answer you even if I tell you not to talk to me. But let me immerse myself like this.”

“.....Okay.”

If he's talking like that, he couldn't even force him to do the interview. The servers looked at him laughing brightly. There were no prettier customers than the one that knew how to enjoy their cooking.

Jo Minjoon bit his lips. He was angry. In the world, there were these kinds of dishes, but why did he keep living while eating things that couldn't even be said. And that wasn't only in his case. Many people were living without any kind of relation to this kind of cooking. The biggest problem would be the money, but even so, it was so delicious to the point he couldn't accept reality.

The next dish came without them having the leisure to rest. It just seemed like a fight with a tumbling doll; if you knocked it once, it would get up again. And when he thought that he ate it all, the next dish came immediately.

However, the dishes that came one by one were all perfect. Even if it was a place that received three Michelin stars, he thought if it was possible for a course cooking to proceed without flaws. What Jo Minjoon usually insisted on the things that had to be placed on top a plate, they had it all. The word that a chef had to be perfect like a chef, he was experiencing those words that felt to be far away in this place.

The next dish was bread, and the score was 7. The sauce was a green butter made by mixing normal butter, parsley, and tarragon. Normal butter was long and curvy like a well-cooked udon noodle, and the green butter was rolled so beautifully that at first glance, it

made you think that it was a fruit.

After eating the fist-size bread, the next dish came immediately after. On top of the dish was placed cucumber, green apple, cheese, onion, and tapioca chip, but then the chef came. It was the head chef. He personally served a hot orange consomé on their dishes.

The flavor was obviously good. He could never imagine that the warm cucumber could be felt this deliciously. The heated cucumber had its original aroma a bit dispersed, but it didn't mean that the flavor fell. Rather, the orange consomé filled the empty space, and the green apple made the overall weight to be light.

The next dish was salmon sous vide that was served with olive, lemon peel pure, cabbage, and potatoes as garnish. Sous vide. It was a cooking method that used low temperature for quite a while, and it could take up to 72 hours if it was long. The head chef Dave had said that he had cooked for 24 hours.

And certainly, that time was clearly buried in the salmon's skin. It was soft but didn't crumble easily, a skin that didn't have fishy smell but only good aroma. It was the best salmon dish Jo Minjoon had ever tried in his life. So it was rather disappointing that the salmon was only the size of a bite.

Every time a dish came, the sommelier came with various kinds of wine and served on the cups. However, it was to the point that they didn't even need wine. Because even if the alcohol's sour and sweet flavor didn't cleanse the mouth, the food was already perfect.

It was a new world for Jo Minjoon. How much could cooking extend, how much of an original combination was possible, and how well could they bring out the flavor of an ingredient. It was a time he could learn all of those things.

The problem was after that. Jo Minjoon said with an angry voice.

“I will get crazy.”

“What, Why? Is there something weird?”

The cameramen and the staff all looked at him with nervous expressions. Could the dishes have not been that good? Jo Minjoon said with a mortifying face.

“I’m full.”

“... ..”

Joanne didn’t say anything and just looked at him. Anderson frowned.

“Now that you say that, I am also getting conscious of that.”

“Do like this.”

Ivanna opened her mouth. She was leaning her body while seating in the chair to the right and to the left, then again to the right. It seemed like a metronome stick was moving. Joanne asked as if she had seen something really strange.

“.....What are you doing?”

“I saw this on TV a long time ago. It’s a method a person who ate 170 pieces of sushi at once revealed. If you shake your body like this, the food in the stomach gets ordered, and space for more food to get in appears.”

“Even so, It’s embarrassing. Stop.”

Joanne blushed more than Ivanna and held her. Ivanna looked at her with a face filled with dissatisfaction. This 22-year-old little lady had a childish side in her at her age.

“I told you a method because you said you were full.”

“.....I think that even Minjoon wouldn’t use that method.”

At Joanne’s words, Ivanna looked at him as if it was true. He evaded her gaze with an awkward face. It was at that moment. The next dish came.

‘.....9 points.’

He still couldn’t see a 10 points dish. He thought that at least one would appear, but even after the main dish came and didn’t get that score, it would be better to fold his expectation.

But of course, it was the same that this dish was outstanding. He could only make an 8-point dish even after revealing that supernatural like concentration. But for it to be 9 points, honestly, it was too much for him.

What came now was a well cooked wagyu steak with roasted salsify, [moki mushrooms](#)(목이버섯) and [matsutake mushrooms](#), and the herbs [mashua](#) and [finger lime](#). This lime that was called as caviar lime was long like a finger and the full shape seemed to be like it was filled with eggs.

The sour flavor was obvious strong like lime, but the well-ripened finger lime also had abundant sweet flavor. And as that sweet flavor and the tough flavor combined, a lovely flavor that was hard to express was there. But at that moment, Jo Minjoon tilted his head. It was delicious. However, it seemed to be arranged for the sake of the next dish rather than be finished as it was.

It wasn't even an appetizer, but a main dish. And the size of it was only about two bubble gums. They say that restaurants give you a minimum amount to save the flavor, but even so, this was not too much.

It was at that moment that Elly brought a dish. However, Jo Minjoon's eyes weren't fixed in the dish. He couldn't do so right now. The window that appeared next to the dish was taking his attention.

[Calf cheek meat]

Freshness: 95%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 10/10



His heart beat. Jo Minjoon looked at the dish with the eyes of a girl that had fallen in love. It was to the point that Elly, that was distributing the dishes, to blush at that moment. Jo Minjoon said with a shaking voice.

“How.....should I eat this?”

It wasn't even surrounded by ice like the previous dish. However he wanted to ask. He wanted to enjoy this moment a little more perfectly and clearly. Elly said with a calm voice.

“The ingredients in the sides are different, so it would be good to feel the differences in flavor. Between right and left, I recommend you eating the left side first.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon looked at the dish. He was bewitched by the score so he couldn't properly look at the dish. But just like Elly said, the ingredients in the sides were different. On the left [endive](#) that was boiled down in red wine, sunflower seeds, raisins, black mint, and chive, and a red wine sauce was applied. On the other hand, the right was white anchovy [tempura](#) and white anchovy cream.

It was at the moment that he sliced the left cheek meat in a suitable size and put the other ingredients the more he could and put it in his mouth. The flavor didn't seem to be felt by his tongue but by his brain, that his temple shook. There seemed to be some flavor of alcohol left in the red wine sauce. The flavor and weight was so strong and slushy, that after the combining it with the

sauce it shook his tongue for the first time. After that, the texture and the flavored cheek meat that was being chewed could be felt more clearly.

It seemed to have been steamed in the oven, but the overall texture of the cheek meat was soft and moist. And even so the flavor was so alive you could feel the texture of the meat one by one. Each time he chewed the meat, the sunflower seeds, herbs, and raisins showed its presence by mixing with the flavor and aroma of the meat.

The feeling was similar to watching a 3D movie after having always watched it in 2D. The dishes he had thought to be complex until now were all simple and plain. He forced to press down the stirring emotions, and he now looked at the ones in the right.

Tempura. It referred to japanese fried food. Anchovies, saying it easily was a thick [myeolchi](#)(멸치). Next to it was placed a white anchovy cream that seemed to be perilla seeds sauce along with wine sauce. Jo Minjoon sliced the tempura and cheek meat moderately, and put it in his mouth along with white anchovy cream.

And at that moment, Jo Minjoon's face contorted. Not because it was disgusting, but because it was too delicious. It was so delicious that it felt like you were going to be crushed down by it. The anchovy that was hidden inside the fried tempura that was crunchy and yet soft met with the cheek meat, and when white anchovy cream softly covered the both of them, that flavor.....was difficult to compare to any other thing. Smiling should be normal, but he couldn't express the satisfaction just by

raising the corner of his mouth. And it was obvious to tense all of the muscles in his face.

Suddenly, he started to shed tears. It wasn't that his eyes became teary like before. He really shed tears. Jo Minjoon wiped the tears in his blushed face with a handkerchief.

And the moment he wiped off the tears, many alarms appeared in front of him.

[You ate a dish that has brought the utmost of the limits of the chef.]

[You comprehended the flavor of the dish in all the ways. Your horizon in tasting broadens widely.]

[Your tasting level has increased!]

## Chapter 68: Temptation Of A Three Star (3)

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If it was like usual, he would have been overjoyed by the notification. But right now, it wasn't a number but the deep emotions that passed through his tongue was felt more densely and clearly.

Jo Minjoon grabbed the red wine bread and wiped up the remaining sauce in the plate. Cleaning the dish without leaving a drop of sauce was more of a compliment than hundred words. Elly took out the empty plates with a smile in her face.

The main dish ended, and a sense of accomplishment and reality came at the same time. Jo Minjoon laughed embarrassedly. Even though the food was delicious, the fact that he had cried was quite embarrassing. Anderson said with a calm face.

“If you are paying with your tears after eating something delicious, it is rather cheap.”

“.....But we do pay. Don't the staff pay for us?”

“Acting so tight... Then take it as a tip. A tears tip.”

The moment he wanted to say something back at Anderson, the servers approached. The plate right now had a round shape with its side higher, just like a soup plate. And inside of it was a frozen cranberry and caramelized cranberry, roasted rye bread crumbs, and a roasted meringue with sage on top of it. They thought that it was kind of heavy to be a dessert, but at that moment, another server came with plates in both of his hands.

There was a pine needle spread on the plate, and on top of that was a seasoning ice. The server placed those ices on each of the plates. Honestly, you wouldn't bother to think about the difference putting it before and after, but in the end it was a problem of service. Because looking at a dish being completed right before your eyes was also fun to look.

The flavor didn't have a big difference to what you saw from the outside. The little marvelous point was that the aroma of the pine needle was felt in the ice, but the dishes they had already tried were so splendid they couldn't be amazed by something like this. A course that organized the flavor of the course cleanly in your mouth, it was that kind of feeling.

As they emptied the plate, an ice coffee along with boiled down pear came out. Inside of it was a ganache mixed with chocolate and cream, a crunchy [cardamomo](#) and [elderflower](#), and a [tamarind](#) juice. Because the indian spices cardamomo and tamarind were put in, the overall flavor had an unique characteristic of Southeast Asia.

“.....This is also delicious.”

Jo Minjoon laughed. For there to be not even one mistake in the course. No, it was on the level where there couldn't be mistakes. They were all excessively delicious. The carefulness and the daringness of the head chef was felt clearly in the dish.

‘One day, I will also.....’

It was a composition that just made you think like that.

The next dish was a caramelized [sudachi](#). Sudachi in Korea was a fruit that was also known as yeong orange (영귤). It had an overall yellow colour. Below everything was a transparent and watery sudachi curd, which felt softer than cream.

The things that were on top of the sudachi cord were roasted cashew nut, asian pear, nastrium, green apple jelly, and celery.

The aroma of the sudachi felt like it caught the basics rather than being excessive. The savory flavor of the cashew nut and the sweetness of the jelly and the pear, and on top of that, combined with the sudachi custard's freshness the flavor, was quite luxurious.

The desserts kept coming. Lemon mint or frozen chestnut powder, vanilla cream and milk jam, chestnut purée along with chocolate pastry. It was surrounded by a chocolate shell and inside was caramel popcorn covered by liquid caramel. There were branches and dried medicines on the dish. After eating the chocolates one by one, the meal ended.

Only eating took almost two and a half hours. The amount on the dishes wasn't much, but as you ate constantly for long it filled your stomach quite much. It felt similar to having eaten three packs of ramen in one go.

As he looked at the others, they were in a similar state. Peter took in air with difficulty. He was originally slim and had a short

mouth, so there was no way he could have taken this long course meal easily.

“Now, even if they say that one dish costs a thousand dollars I won’t eat it. No, I can’t.”

“.....I wonder. If it does come out I think that you will eat again. Anderson. You seem to have quite a comfortable face.”

“This amount of food isn’t much. Your stomach are the small ones.”

Jo Minjoon didn’t refute back. It was just as he had said. He wasn’t different to a big eater. It was at that moment that Martin looked at Jo Minjoon and opened his mouth.

“By now, you should have plentifully enjoyed yourselves, so how do you feel? Interview, Is it going to be hard?”

“Let’s do it. What are you curious of? No, thinking about it, there’s no need to even ask. A 10-point dish, there was one. Although it was only one, it was enough with just that to have become the best meal I had in my life.”

“.....There was?”

Martin put on a surprised face as if he wasn’t expecting it. Honestly, he thought that the best score would be a 9. Even if it was three stars, taking into account the absolute taste Jo Minjoon had showed them until now, he thought that the 10 points would only suit a transcendent-like dish.

It was only 10 points by words, but it was top score for him. A

dish he didn't even have the need to score. It wasn't easy for him to think that it existed in this world. However, there couldn't be seen even a trace of hesitation in his face. Martin said with a little excited voice.

“What was that dish? Ah, no. It's nothing. I think that I know. It was that, right? That.....white anchovy and calf cheek meat?”

There wasn't even a need to guess. Because the only time Jo Minjoon showed the strongest reaction to the point he cried, was only once. Jo Minjoon nodded. Martin let out a cheerful voice.

“Certainly, even from the epicureans it had a good reputation. It's the top dish that made this restaurant to become a three star.....”

“It was that kind of a dish. I already told you that it was 10 points. It was also 100 points. It was so perfect that it was pointless to score it. Because it made me want to go to France to study.”

Jo Minjoon said with a serious face without a trace of laughter. He could see from his face how stimulated he got. Martin looked at the other four.

“Do you agree?”

“I'm not able to score it, but I do agree on the point that there was no parts to point out. At least, I think that it had reached the limit from what a chef can do.”

Anderson said with a hard voice. It was at the moment when



Martin was thinking how to use this scene. A man who was tall and with strong muscles came walking to them. It was Dave. He seemed to be in his middle thirties. Because his long brown hair was tied backwards and his face could be seen more clearly because of that, he seemed to be a celebrity. Dave glanced at Jo Minjoon, and looked at all of them.

“Did it suit your tastes?”

“Yes, it was very good.”

“The best of my life.”

At the compliments, a smile could be seen in his mouth. He slowly opened his mouth.

“When I got a call from teacher Rachel, I was really surprised. Because she had never even asked me to do something like this even once. But.....”

Dave made eye contact with him. Jo Minjoon didn't evade his sight. Rather, he shined his eyes and looked at him. A guy who wasn't even in his forties and made a 10-point dish. He couldn't not respect him. Also, his cooking level was 9. It meant that he was in the same level as Joseph. But of course, even if they were the same level 9, there would be some differences.....

“So the broadcast where the owner of absolute taste is, is this one. I originally don't watch the TV much, but I have heard a lot of stories about you and your absolute sense of taste. I also looked at the video. It's a pleasure to meet you, Minjoon.”

“No, the pleasure is mine. It was a really good dish. The best I

have had in all my life. Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon held tightly the hand Dave lent. Dave’s corner of the mouth raised.

“10 points, was there any?”

“Yes. The calf cheek meat was a 10 points. And it was also the first in my life.”

“.....Good. I feel as good as being acknowledged by teacher Rachel.”

At Dave’s words, Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly. He felt quite burdened for him to have put his compliment in such a high regard, but even so, he honestly didn’t hate it. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“Someday.....I will also show you this kind of dish.”

“You will be able to. Because in this world, the taste is more important than what you are thinking about. The ability you possess, I hope you use it well.”

Jo Minjoon just smiled without saying anything.

—

The van that was going back to Grand Chef’s house was silent. It wasn’t because of a particular reason. The four all them were fallen asleep. Jo Minjoon closed his eyes and started to think in the

menus he ate today.

‘If I copied it.....Would I be able to copy the flavor to an extent?’

Honestly, it was difficult to do so if he couldn’t read the recipe. As his tasting level became 8, he could read the recipes of 8-point dishes, but level 9 dishes was something he couldn’t reach yet. He could read the ingredients regardless of the score, but he could only know the recipes with tasting level that was similar or lower.

The difference of one drop of sauce, a world where the time that you briefly put the ingredient on fire, changes it everything. What he experienced today in the dishes was a fragment of that world. Why could it be? That at this moment, he thought of Kaya’s face.

‘Kaya would have also liked it if she tried it.’

Perhaps, she would have liked it more than Jo Minjoon. Although Jo Minjoon didn’t have an ability he was born with, in Kaya’s environment it was already difficult to eat something excellent. Maybe, the best food she could eat was only the ones she ate.

She had a tasting level 10 and had such a sensitive and delicate tongue, but grew up eating only her food. Maybe, if she had tried Dave’s food.....she would have gotten a shock that was incomparable to what he had felt.

Jo Minjoon touched his handphone. He wanted to call her, but

perhaps they would still be in the middle of the disqualifying mission. In the end, he could only send a message. As he sent the brief ‘What are you doing?’ the reply came back after a few seconds.

[Kaya : In the middle of the disqualifying mission.]

[Me : What is the mission?]

[Kaya : Apple pie. From the dough to all.]

[Kaya: They are evaluating right now. Marco’s pie.]

Apple pie for Marco. It was a mission he didn’t even have to worry about. Jo Minjoon sent a message again.

[Me : The food was really delicious. It would have been good if you had come.]

[Kaya : Are you making fun of me?]

[Me : It’s because it’s really regretful. Should I make a minor copy of it and teach you the flavor?]

[Kaya : Want me to teach you the flavor of a bullet?]

He didn’t even have the heart to tease her, but it seemed like she was really angry. To say the flavor of a bullet, even the scale of the threats was different in the United States. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly. He just looked at his handphone for a moment, and a message from her came again.

[Kaya : ...It’s not that I’m really going to shoot you. You aren’t so stupid as to misunderstand this, right?]

It could clearly be seen that this message was sent to see if he hadn't misunderstood. At first, she was a picky kid that only knew how to curse, but as time passed he could see more of her childish side. It was also her that kept bothering him because she thought that he had ignored her in the case of the norimaki. If he sloppily sent a text, she would end up getting hurt again.

[Me : Why are you acting shy? If you are going to act strong, then act strong until the end. Why are you acting like this? It's so not like you.]

[Kaya : It's because you usually act really sensitive.]

Jo Minjoon frowned. To act sensitive. In his memories, he had never acted as such. Of course, he was the type to point out the napkin that was left on the table or that the clothes wasn't clean..... But he thought that it wasn't to the point to hear that he was sensitive.

Of course, he was in the middle of typing something to refute back. A message came again.

[Kaya : Oh, an eliminated one appeared.]

[Me : Who?]

[Kaya : That person.]

It was a brief reply. And also not kind at all. Jo Minjoon just looked at the screen. He sent a message again.

[Me : If you tell me that, how am I supposed to know? Tell me who it is. Who is that person?]

The reply didn't come back.

## Chapter 69: Temptation Of A Three Star (4)

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Was she trying to take revenge because he didn't reply back last time? Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly and closed his handphone. If she wasn't replying back, there was no need to keep pressing her because he would know about it when he arrived.

‘Marco’s certainly not.....’

Who else was on that team? Jo Minjoon started to think. The only ones who were close with him were Marco and Hugo. And it wasn't still clear, but he had also gotten a bit close with Jacob. Aside from them.....

‘It doesn't matter who it is.’

Excluding those three, it would be difficult to say that he was particularly close. Honestly speaking, he didn't feel too disappointed whoever it was. He just wanted to know if the disqualified one wasn't among the three. Of course, one day they would have to separate eventually, but he wanted to delay that the most possible.

However, it always happened contrary to what one expected. When the van arrived at Grand Chef's house and they got down and went to the 4th floor, what they saw was Jacob getting out with his luggage.

Jo Minjoon's face froze momentarily, but then relieved. If he was going to leave, he didn't want to show him a preoccupied face. He

said with a calm voice.

“Are you leaving?”

“It became like that, Unfortunately.”

“You said that your father cooked french dishes? So are you going to work in his restaurant again?”

“No, I’m not planning to. Working below my father’s shadow, and cooking outside. I felt it this time, that it’s a bit different. I will get reprimanded a bit, but I have to walk my own path.”

Jo Minjoon smiled, but inwardly sighed. He was a bit uneasy. Because Marco’s baking level was 7, Hugo’s 6, and Jacob’s was 5. Because he was at a level where if he slipped once, he would easily disqualify. Although they didn’t have high baking levels, level 5 was the worst of all excluding Jo Minjoon.

‘If I was doing that disqualifying mission.....’

Even thinking about him got him chills down the spine. Jo Minjoon’s baking level was still 4. Probably, the loser would have been decided even before the mission started. Maybe the cooking level would compensate for the lacking baking level.....But that was certainly lacking.

Jo Minjoon laughed sadly.

“Bye.”

“Yeah. You survive well.”



Jacob who had talked like that, moved his feet but then stopped. Jacob and Anderson were exchanging sights. Actually, Jacob was closer to Anderson rather than Jo Minjoon. Maybe it was like that because he teamed up with him and Kaya in the past. It was short, they were sharing a dense friendship.

But just because of that, they didn't need to talk long. Anderson said briefly.

“You have done well.”

“.....Win, Anderson. Win.”

Jacob smiled bitterly and moved the steps he couldn't. Nobody followed his back until the end. If he did so, then they thought that they will slow him down.

Only after Jacob disappeared down the stairs, Jo Minjoon let the sigh he was holding. Anderson looked at the surroundings with a sharper gaze than usual. In that moment, he looked at Kaya, but then proceeded to look at Marco. He said with a little higher voice.

“Why did Jacob disqualify? Tell me.”

“.....He put cheddar in the apple pie and put it in the oven.”

“What?”

Anderson frowned as if it didn't make sense at all. Because it was a recipe which he could clearly see that it was going to fail even without seeing the results. Apple pie and cheese. Even if you were a

skilled chef, it was difficult to bring out the harmony of those ingredients.

At that moment, he understood why he disqualified. Anderson let out a sigh. Kaya glanced at him, but didn't say anything and looked at Jo Minjoon. It was at the moment Kaya wanted to open her lips. Chloe took a step and approached him.

“How was the three star?”

“It was perfect.”

Jo Minjoon replied briefly. There was no need to talk long. It was perfect. Those short words held all of his feelings. Honestly, if he added something more to that, it would be comparable to a leftover. It had all the points cooking needed to have.

At first glance it seemed like a simple word, but to make that kind of dish you needed a huge amount of experience, effort, and care. Those were obvious things for those who loved to cook. Chloe put a dumbfounded face for a moment, but soon said with a soft voice as if she had understood.

“You should have enjoyed it a lot.”

Jo Minjoon replied with just a smile. It was a smile full of happiness. At that moment, Chloe looked at his smile absentmindedly and turned her head. Kaya said with a sharp voice.

“Don't laugh. You pig.”

“Now, I need permission to also laugh?”

“My stomach hurts. I ate it when others eat more delicious things than me.”

“You are really spoiled. Your friend can eat delicious things.”

“I hate it even more when a friend does that.”

Kaya talked like that and glared at Jo Minjoon. He just laughed and sat on the sofa in the lobby. The other participants chased away the depressing mood and approached him. They could only be curious about the three star. The questions poured like a waterfall.

“What dishes came out?”

“Did you meet the chef there? What did he say?”

“How much did the course cost?”

Jo Minjoon raised his hand as to telling them to calm down. He opened his mouth with a sickened face.

“Why are you only asking me? Ask something to the others too.”

“.....Your taste is sensitive, so you will be able to clearly feel it. Express it for us.”

“I wonder. Even if I felt it, i’m not confident in expressing it.....’

“Fine. Then at least tell us the score. How was it?”

Of course this question. It was as he expected. Didn’t Martin also focus on asking him the score? Jo Minjoon replied with a smile. He didn’t hit around the bush.

“10 points, there was one.”

Along with those words, almost at the same time, sighs of amazements were heard. They looked right next to them how Jo Minjoon scored the dishes. Even 7 and 8 points dishes were already outstanding ones, but for it to be 10 points. Even listening to it was a far-off field.

The conversation proceeded for quite a while. Maybe because the atmosphere didn't get down, they overdid it a little. But just because of that, they didn't make up the interest and expectation. The three star was the dream of every chef. Although the price was the price, because there weren't many that amounted, normal people wouldn't be able to get recruited. That was reality.

And because they were participant, it was no different at all. They had the dream to cook, but most of them had normal jobs that wasn't related to cooking. Wasn't Chloe a normal college student?

They talked even after midnight. In the middle of that, they made some snacks because they were hungry. Because they wouldn't be given a mission for at least some days. For the rhythm of the routine of life to get ruined one day wasn't that big of a problem.

As night came, there naturally was alcohol bottles next to them. The flavor wasn't so good because it was for cooking uses, but it was enough to keep holding a long conversation.

“Would we be able to make it.....?”

It was Hugo. He looked in front with cloudy eyes because of being drunk. Nobody could know what was going to be in the end of his sight. Maybe it was the opened champagne, or the tiramisu next to them. Jo Minjoon drenched his tongue with mojito and opened his mouth. It was non alcoholic.

“Chefs that succeeded say that you have to work hard..... But you don’t know. Because the advices of people who succeeded and those who failed will be different. Normally, the former one will be of more help but.....”

“Chefs that failed, no, this expression isn’t that good. It doesn’t mean that those who couldn’t receive a Michelin star didn’t work hard. Because, there are very few people that didn’t work hard.”

At Hugo’s reply, Anderson nodded. He opened his mouth.

“I know some people aside from my parents that own a three-star restaurant. And one of them received a three star at the age of 34, and worked for almost ten years. And then, he committed suicide. Maybe it was because he was scared that it would fall to two star. Honestly speaking, if it’s a three star full of burdens.....it’s not nice for me. I just want to do my cooking.”

“However, your cooking will get evaluated. Even if you try not to care about it, in the end you will have to. Aren’t your parents like that?”

“I don’t know. Of course, they will have burdens. But they aren’t people who get swept up by the evaluation of others. Honestly

speaking, even if they have it hard, there are no parents that want to show that to their children.”

Anderson talked like that and drank one more sip of red wine. As time passed, his face became red as the wine. He didn't like alcohol much so he didn't drink it, and because of that he was more sound than others. Jo Minjoon said with a preoccupied face.

“If you keep this up you will probably become zombies when you wake up tomorrow. Why don't you stop drinking for a bit?”

“Shut up. If you aren't going to drink then just silently eat the snacks.”

“.....I warned you.”

Jo Minjoon grumbled and put a biscuit in his mouth. The biscuit Marco made had a lime aroma and a charm you wouldn't get sick of it. He opened his mouth.

“Ah, I need to get some baking skills. But this isn't easy at all.”

“In your country you don't eat much bread.”

“It's more like a snack for us. And there are even less people who make it themselves.”

“Good. If the next mission is a baking one, one guy will surely be below us.”

At Anderson's words Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly. Honestly, it was hard to refute.

“I just have to beg that it doesn’t end up a baking mission.”

“.....You want me to teach you?”

“Ha, what is this? You being kind.”

Honestly speaking, he didn’t have to ask for more if it was Anderson that was going to teach him. Because only him and Marco had baking level 7. Anderson said with a depressed face. Maybe it was because he was drunk, but his voice came out trembling.

“Jacob is gone..... And if you also leave, who will receive my temperament?”

“Then fix it. You and Kaya.”

“Don’t compare me to that spoiled girl.....”

“I can hear you. Shut your mouth.”

At Anderson’s words, Kaya that was fallen in a table said with a cold voice. She didn’t even drink much, but her face was really red. Anderson raised one corner of his mouth excessively. It was an expression you could clearly see that he was drunk.

“Why, if I don’t, are you planning to hit me?”

“You were raised so well that you don’t know how rash market people can be? Huh?”

“What raised well? I also suffered what I had to. It’s always like this. Just because our house lives well they think that we live without worries or hardships.”

“At least, you wouldn’t have brought the leftovers of a cabbage and cook with it just because you thought that it would be a waste”

At Kaya's words, Anderson shut his mouth. He shook his head because of his temperament and got up.

"Ah, I don't know. I'm going to sleep. Drink alcohol or olive oil between yourselves and do you as you please."

He went to his room while tottering. Kaya just glared at him with her cheek resting in the table. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

"You are also quite drunk. Go to sleep."

"I don't want to. Don't order me around. You think that you are able to order me able just because I don't have money and I'm ignorant?"

".....See? You are drunk."

Jo Minjoon put her arm on his shoulders and stood up. He saw Chloe, Marco, Joanne, and the rest that were also fallen on the table, but Kaya came first. Because if they were like that, they wouldn't particularly make an accident. He walked almost by dragging her. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

"I told you not to drink too much. They say that you have to at least be 21 in the US to be able to drink. This is a crime you are doing."

"Don't act so stiff. Didn't you drink at my age?"

"I didn't."

".....Not funny bastard."



Kaya grumbled. Jo Minjoon just frowned and put more strength in the arm he was holding Kaya on. She had eventually stopped walking. He opened his mouth.

“Walk properly.”

“I don’t want to. I’m going to resist. Did you see a cow just let itself be dragged to the slaughter house?”

“You aren’t going to the slaughter house, but to your room.”

Jo Minjoon pinched her wrist with the arm he was holding her. Kaya shouted ‘Ouch!’ and glared at him with resentment.

“I don’t like people who resort to violence.....”

“Why is this violence?”

“That’s why you can’t do alcohol. That person was also drunk.....and beat mom. In front of my eyes. That person that called himself to be my father did that. It’s because of alcohol.”

In the first place, it wasn’t Jo Minjoon that took alcohol but Kaya, but he didn’t tell her that. As he barely got to the fourth floor and left her in her room, Kaya leaned in the wall and looked up at the ceiling dumbfoundedly. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“I understand because I’m drunk.....”

“I’m going to kill you.”

At the unexpected words, Jo Minjoon stopped talking. He looked

at her with a dubious face. Even if she was drunk, those words were too direct. She opened her childish eyes the most strongly she could and looked at Jo Minjoon, or at the thing only she could see with stubborn eyes.

“The obstacles in front of myself, I will remove them all. I won’t disqualify again. Victory, or in life. It won’t get ruined again. You just see. How I climb up. I.....I will kill you all.”

It was at that moment when he wanted to say something. Kaya closed her eyes, and her body slowly fell. Jo Minjoon hurriedly held her. Her freckled nose, her blushed cheeks. Looking at the tears that flowed down he said with a complicated voice.

“Are you that scared?”

It was said in a low voice so she couldn’t hear it.

# Chapter 70: Footprints In Front Of His Feet

## (1)

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Six days have passed since the food truck mission and the meal in the three star. And in that time, no missions were give. Perhaps it was consideration for them because they had suffered for one week in the truck, but maybe it was also because the schedule with the judges didn't match like before.

Although there was no mission, there was one episode broadcasted. It was yesterday, The 7th episode. The story about the team mission was told. The broadcast where Kaya and Jacob separated in teams, and Peter made an accident. And.....

Jo Minjoon turned his eyes. Peter was seated in the countertop and was looking at his handphone for a while. He could only do so. Because after the broadcast ended, the main subjects of discussion were Peter and Kaya. Martin was a pro. Just because Peter was sad, he wasn't the kind of person to edit that scene to make him look good.

All the words Peter had said were propagated exactly the same. Even if you took into account that he was less mature mentally, the level of it was a bit high to just let it pass. Because he had cursed her integrity. Jo Minjoon understood him, because he knew that he wasn't mature enough mentally, couldn't have a smooth social life, and couldn't control himself.

However, the viewers didn't know that. No, even if they did, they wouldn't mind too much. Because in the end, what they heard would only be some words. Peter became a villain. There were

more people than he had thought venting their anger on him.

Some were questioning him. Although his words were harsh, they wondered if Kaya was the one who had started first. However, Kaya's mistake couldn't cover for his mistake. Moreover, after he had cursed like that he had also burnt the tandoori chicken..... As people were more immersed in the program, they could only show a denser anger. Jo Minjoon said along with a sigh.

“.....I told you not to look at the comments.”

The voice was so low it couldn't be heard by Peter. And even if he did tell him, there would be no way he was going to hear him because it was the same for Kaya. And even if he tried to not look at it, if you saw it once, it wouldn't be just twice that you were connected in the internet.

But still, Jo Minjoon's situation was good. Precisely speaking, they thought that he was appearing on the screen for the love line. But after his absolute taste appeared their opinions changed. They started to look at the program as if everything had its own reason. The different feeling Asians gave would end up being the wings for Jo Minjoon. And people also called him a genius that had understanding way beyond what they could understand.

Honestly speaking, he didn't hate that. Although he felt a bit burdened by it, he also felt flustered and laughed because of it. That people liked him. That people he didn't even know the faces of were placing expectation in front of his name. That was a really marvelous feeling.

“We will soon start broadcasting! Everybody put back your handphones!”

The staff’s voice was heard with strength. As Peter hurriedly put his handphone on the pocket of his apron and soon after, the judges came in. Like always, some words that raised the mood was said, and Joseph said said with a calm voice.

“There will be a box in each of your countertops. At the count of three, everybody open the lid. One, two, three!”

After he said that, everybody opened the boxes almost immediately. Some let out sighs of relief and some frowned. Jo Minjoon was the latter one. The thing that was in front of him was a broad and flat piece of meat. Precisely speaking, it was a piece of meat with a piece of bone. And it wasn’t quite a welcoming customer for him.

T-bone. It was the part that had strip steak and tenderloin in it. Joseph said with a serious face with no trace of laughter.

“T-bone isn’t the most delicious part of the meat, but that’s a personal problem. However, I can certainly say this much. T-bone steak is the most difficult part to cook along the steaks. If you cook with the same fire strength, the strip steak will inevitably cook faster than the tenderloin part. And of course, we wish that both of the parts are cooked similarly.”

Several sighs were heard from around. This was a mission that

simply followed skill. So if you made a mistake for even a moment, it would be the end right then. However, Joseph's words that was heard after that relieved them a bit.

“However, there's no need to be that nervous. Because this mission will just be warm up. The first place will be given a benefit. An exemption from the following disqualifying mission.”

At his words, some of the eyes shined. Jo Minjoon too let out a sigh of relief. He couldn't get first place. Because it wasn't easy to get T-bone in Korea. Many butchers sold you the strip steak and tenderloin separately, there was almost nowhere that sold you the T-bone by itself. Even if you went to a huge market, it was difficult to get T-bone. That was reality.

So of course, his experience could only be low. As he looked at the meat, it's thickness was only around 2cm. Of course, he couldn't say that it was thin, but he also couldn't say that it was thick. And basically, steak was much easier to cook if it was thick.

It couldn't be helped. Because if it was thin, the thinner it was, the shorter the time it was in contact with fire would be. There were many cases where you wanted to sear the exterior a little and ended up overcooking the interior.

“We won't be using a sauce. Just season it with salt and pepper. Bear in mind. The most important thing is that both of the parts have to be equally cooked. And of course, flavor is the basic. Start! We will give you exactly 10 minutes.”

Jo Minjoon quickly turned his head. Rather than having a method to cook T-bone, you could only rely on your senses and experience. And actually, when you hired a chef in a steak restaurant, they say that they evaluate using T-bone, so he couldn't guess what would be the level.

Of course, simply giving it flavor was not a difficult thing, because you could just eat it regardless of how it was cooked. If the strip steak was medium, then the tenderloin was about medium rare. And honestly, there were customers who enjoyed the small difference in flavor.

However, there were also people that wanted both of the parts equally cooked. If he couldn't satisfy the need of every customer, then that person couldn't be called as a completed chef.

What he had to think now was the cooking method. As he slightly glanced, Kaya was taking a grill. It seemed like she was planning to cook the steak in the grill. (TL:really?) (PR: No, Minjoon. She took the grill 'coz for giggles. XD) Because her sense in fire was outstanding, maybe it was the best decision for her.

However, it wasn't an option he could choose. Why did he get amazed by looking at her roasted eel? Wasn't it because she knew the difficulty of cooking with fire? If he sloppily copied her, then he would end up by burning the exterior.

Jo Minjoon cut off the fat and put round pepper on it for the aroma. He didn't put salt. Cooking it to become medium took 4 minutes. Calculating the resting time, then it would be 5 minutes. If he put salt and let it rest, because of the osmotic pressure, it

would rise sloppily to the exterior. Because of that juice the heat in the pan got wasted, the juice too got wasted, and the searing could only get weak. If he wasn't planning to let it rest for 40 minutes, then it was better to put salt at the moment.

Jo Minjoon looked at his surrounding. And at that moment, his brows twitched. He was looking at an incomprehensible scene. Peter was heating the oven. Maybe Alan was thinking the same as him, so he got in front of him and asked.

“.....How are you planning to cook?”

“After putting it in the oven and cooking it, I will use the frying pan to sear the exterior and let it rest.”

“Do you think that you will be able to control how both of the sides cook?”

“If I put only the tenderloin part in the end part of the pan, I think that it will cook less.”

“.....I wonder. Let's see what happens.”

At that moment, Peter's face became dim. He thought that his cooking method had some chances, but as Alan came like that, his confidence immediately disappeared. However, he couldn't fix the direction because of one word.

Most of the participants were resting the meat. And 5 minutes passed like that. The participants that were only looking at the clock's needle, moved as 5 minutes passed.

Jo Minjoon took out the round pepper and put some salt. He then



oiled the pan using the fat he had cut off. In the middle it made a sizzling sound, Alan opened his mouth.

“Do you have any experience with T-bone?”

“No. Almost none.”

“Take into account the range the fire reaches in the frying pan. With just that, it will be quite the help.”

He was planning to do so even if he hadn't told him, but Jo Minjoon smiled without saying anything. Because he wasn't so spoiled as to act sharply at the worried advice.

As Alan said, controlling the part the fire touches the frying pan was the priority. Jo Minjoon placed the frying pan, and placed the tenderloin part where the fire was strong. But because of that, there couldn't be too much of a difference. If he did that, then the tenderloin would get more overcooked than the steak strip.

The cooking method of the steak was different from each chef. Some said that you didn't have to flip it more than twice, and some said that you had to flip it once every minute, or every 30 seconds. Jo Minjoon was the type to flip it every minute. If he did that, the juice that was gathered in the center of the meat, would spread and inflate the meat while it was resting.

Rather than what was right and what was wrong, it was better to look at it as an individual taste. Jo Minjoon checked the clock and flipped the steak. He didn't particularly use the arroser method. Because not only it dispersed his concentration, but the extra oil could change the cooking point. Jo Minjoon wasn't on the level he

could read the role of the oil on the meat, yet.

The estimated cooking score was 6. It couldn't be helped. Because he was just roasting it and not using any sauce, so it was difficult to get a score beyond that.

What Jo Minjoon wanted was right a medium. After exactly flipping it three times, he placed the meat on kitchen towel. If he only waited for 1 minute for the juices to return.....Although he didn't know if both sides would be medium, at least, he was certain that the flavor would be okay.

The buzzer rang. All of the participants took their hands off their dish. Jo Minjoon looked at his own. The score of the T-bone steak that appeared after it rested was 6. It was the same score as the recipe.

The judges called the people one by one. They cut the tenderloin part, and the strip steak part. And after that, if the cooking point was different, then they didn't even put it in their mouths. For example, Peter was one case.

“I asked you. If you would be able to do it. Look.”

Alan showed the sliced part to him. One part was medium, and the other medium rare. The blood in it could clearly be seen. Emily let out a sigh.

“Even if it's not an eliminating mission, this is too much. Don't

you know that you can't take risks in cooking?"

".....I'm sorry."

Peter barely replied with his face having turned pale. Even so, it seemed like he was filled with burdens because of the comments. And even the judges seemed to have it hard to say something else looking at his face. They sent back Peter and called the next participant. It was Anderson. Joseph sliced both of the parts and put a nice smile.

"Both of them are medium-well done. And they aren't burnt at all. It's exactly cooked. You are really experienced, Anderson. It seemed like you couldn't properly show your skills for a while, but it seems like you came back to your place."

"Thank you."

Anderson didn't even laugh and replied back. Because he couldn't be happy yet. He wasn't 1st yet. After they ate it, bigger praises came after that. All of the judges judges as his steak was damper and had a more overwhelming flavor than the medium roasted steak.

Jo Minjoon understood their evaluation. Cooking it simply with salt and pepper and getting that score, meant that if he added a proper sauce, he would have gotten an 8.

The next one was Jo Minjoon. He walked to the front with a calm face with his dish. After Emily grabbed her knife and sliced the meat, she nodded.

“Medium. They are both cooked the same. Although there’s a faint difference.....Well, even picky customers wouldn’t complain about it. You said that you didn’t have much experience with T-bone, right?”

“Yes.”

“Taking that into account, it’s excellent. And the texture..... Mmm. This much is fine, and it seems like you caught the juice well. You have done well.”

If what they had told Anderson was a praise, then what they told to him was merely a compliment. He felt rather disappointed because he was kind of expecting something, but he could do nothing about it. The difference in experience was an absolute thing.

The last participant to get evaluated was Kaya. She got out with her dish in her hands. Joseph looked at the dish with an interesting face.

“You were the only one to have cooked with a grill in direct fire. Kaya. Are you confident on your choice?”

“My strongest point is the use of fire. If I hadn’t cooked, I would have become an arsonist.”

“I will trust in you.”

Joseph sliced the meat with soft hand movements. It was just as she had said. Medium. The insides were cooked in a pink colour and was showing itself. It was the same for the tenderloin and steak strip. Joseph slowly put that meat in his mouth.

When he chewed the meat for the first time, his face was really bright. But the second and third time he ate it, his face became strange. And it was the same for the other judges. Kaya looked at the judges with a nervous face.

“This is well roasted. But Kaya, it seems like you forgot one thing. Did you perhaps cook all the sides of it, and after that the interior?”

At those words, Kaya put on an ‘oh’ face. She didn’t do it. She was so focused in the balance of the sides that she forgot to roast the exterior to contain the juices. Jo Minjoon looked at her. Unfortunately, her steak was 5 points. It couldn’t be helped. Because she had missed the juices, she had also lost the basics.

‘Even Kaya has times when she slips like this.’

Excluding the time when she reveled against her team because of her temperament, then this was the first time. Joseph said in a gentle manner.

“It seems like you know what your mistake is. Good. Kaya, a chef who knows their mistakes tend to grow. Go back to your place.”

“.....Yes.”

Kaya returned with a disheartened face. Now that the situation turned out like this, it was clear who was going to get first place. There were many people who had cooked both of the sides similarly, but only one person got that flavor perfectly and even heard praises. Anderson. Jo Minjoon looked at him. He was the

kind to usually show his skills, but the more you looked at him, the more it made you think that he couldn't think of his skills lightly. She lost to Kaya and became 2nd place, but that meant that if it wasn't for her, he would have won.

“We have decided who would get the first place after we discussed it. The conclusion came quite easily. Anderson. Congratulations! You are exempted from the disqualifying mission. Go to the 2nd floor!”

“Thank you.”

Anderson said with a calm voice and moved his feet. Along with the envious gazes of the participants following his back, Alan opened his mouth.

“Then, I will announce the next mission. Probably, it could be a mission which some of you won't like it at all.”

Alan talked like that and glanced at Jo Minjoon. He twitched his brows. He felt an ominous feeling. Alan continued to say in a calm voice.

“The theme for this mission is.....Dessert.”

# Chapter 71: Footprints In Front Of His Feet

## (2)

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Even after a field he wasn't specialized in came out, Jo Minjoon's face didn't shake. It was a door he had to climb someday.

But of course, if it was him from before, he would be feeling regret right now. However, he wasn't. And it wasn't because just recently, his baking level got up to 5. Because in the first place, not all desserts had to be made by baking.

‘.....Should I try that?’

Jo Minjoon's gaze grew sharper. What he was thinking right now was the dessert he ate in Rose Island. Excluding the chocolate pastry, they were all 8 points, and it also meant that Jo Minjoon knew the recipes of them.

But of course, knowing the recipe and imitating it were two different things. But at least, he was confident in bringing out 90% of the flavor. That dish that had sudachi curd and green apple jelly, and roasted cashew nuts as a garnish.

After he came back from the restaurant, Jo Minjoon worked hard to imitate all of the dishes excluding the [molecular gastronomy](#). And the dish he got closer to was this one. Because right yesterday, he imitated it, and succeeded on getting 7 points.

If there was a varying factor, then it would be time. Jo Minjoon

looked at Joseph's lips with an anxious face. However, the one who opened her mouth was Emily, and not Joseph.

“You have two choices. One is one hour, the other one is two hours. If you choose the two hours one with something you can make in just one, then there's no need to even talk about the score, right? Use a dessert using the given time perfectly. And.”

Emily paused for a moment. She continued talking with a serious face.

“In this mission, two people will disqualify. One from the one hour, and another one from the two hours. There won't be given any more opportunities to the both. So be prudent in choosing the time. We will give you 10 minutes. Go to the right countertops if you want to make it in one hour, and to the left if you want to make it in two. It's left and right from where i'm standing.

Jo Minjoon didn't have more options but to choose the two-hour one. Because if he wanted to properly make jelly, he would at least need that time. The unexpected one was Marco. Just as his specialty was baking, he thought that he would be choosing the two-hour one, but what he chose was the one-hour one. And aside from him, Chloe, Hugo, and Peter chose the one-hour time.

And there were five people in total. In the other side, there were six people that chose two hours. Jo Minjoon, Joanne, Ivanna, and another three. Jo Minjoon glanced at the others. The one that caught his attention was a black woman called Sasha. She seemed to be five years older than him. And she, who was slim and had a gentle character, wasn't someone Jo Minjoon originally was aware



of. A relationship where she brought her food to ask for the cooking score occasionally. However, that changed a few days ago.

[Sasha Kane]

Cooking level: 6

Baking level: 7

Tasting level: 6

Decorations level: 5

The only ones that had baking level 7 were only two, Marco and Anderson. And it was the same a few days ago. And perhaps, a few weeks ago. Because it wasn't that Jo Minjoon checked the levels of the others occasionally. And he only knew of her change a few days ago.

The score the carrots pound cake she brought two days ago asking for the score wasn't normal. 8 points. When he checked her level because he was surprised, her level was already up.

‘.....To grow in the middle of the competition. No, I'm the same.’

He didn't really feel like congratulating her. Who in the world could congratulate a competitor so honestly?

Jo Minjoon looked at his stats window with regretful eyes. His levels didn't seem like it would rise soon. Precisely speaking, it was for the cooking level. After coming to the US, excluding cooking level, all the other things rose by one, but only the cooking level

didn't. Of course, as it was an important level, it wouldn't rise that easily. But even so, didn't human greed have no end?

‘If my level rises does my skills rise? Or if I improve my skills, only then would the level rise?’

It was a question he always had, but a person who could answer that couldn't be found anywhere. When his cooking level rose to 6, funnily it wasn't when he was cooking, but when he ate Lucas's wife, Jane's, cooking. It said it had raised because his comprehension towards cooking broadened.

It was a question he always had, but a person who could answer that can't be found anywhere.

And it was actually like that. That time he ate a real american meal, and he could clearly feel what american cooking was like. It was good to look at it as his awareness broadened.

‘I thought that the meal in the three star was enough.’

However, what raised wasn't his cooking level but his tasting level. It was unfortunate but it couldn't be helped. Level 7. It was the same level as Kaya, Anderson, and Chloe. Hoping for that level to raise that easily was not a considerate thing. It was at that moment Alan opened his mouth.

“It seems like everyone chose. Bear in mind that this mission is a dessert one. Make a kind of dessert that would make you want to eat it even if you are full and have to throw up just to eat it. The people who chose the one hour will start cooking in one hour. Just

keep looking until then. Well, let's start. Bring your ingredients!"

Jo Minjoon immediately moved his steps. He wasn't planning on grabbing all of the ingredients. In that time, it was better to prepare the green apple jelly a little more quickly. Even so, he had plenty of time while it was boiling. It meant that he could bring the remaining ingredients then.

What he grabbed right now was sugar, a less ripened apple, caramel, and pectin. When he first came to the US, he used the apple peels to use the pectin in it when making jelly because he didn't have gelatin or pectin. But he didn't need to do that if he had pectin powder.

There were two things that could be used when making jelly: gelatin and pectin. There were many people that used agar powder to make jelly, but the texture of it would be more like mook(묵) rather than jelly.

The difference in gelatin and pectin was simple. Gelatin was made by processing animal collagen, and pectin was obtained by extracting it in the kinds of tangerine peel or apple. And the flavor was so different as its root. The jelly made with collagen had a stronger congelation point, but the flavor tended to be weak. Pectin, compared to the collagen, had a lower congelation point but the flavor was stronger.

But he didn't have to think about the pros and cons about gelatin and pectin. Because in what he ate in Rose Island, there was pectin in it. Right in front of him were clear footprints imprinted. Footprints of excellent desserts. So if he stepped just like that, then

it would end there.

After slicing the apple in a wedge form, he put that in boiling water along with sugar and caramel. And then, he went again to the pantry. He had to bring the ingredients he couldn't. Sudachi, asian pear, and nastrium. Cashew nuts, celery, eggs, and butter.

First, when he got back, he checked the pot. And right then, the judges approached him.

“What are you planning to make?”

“I’m planning to imitate what I ate in Rose Island. First, I apply sudachi curd in the floor of the plate, and place round jelly on top of it. I will also put other ingredients.”

“I wonder. I get that you were impressed many times there. But harmony is harmony, the proportion of the ingredients for each sauce is also important. That.....”

Alan was saying that with a slanting attitude, but stopped at that moment. His eyes shook. He asked as if he was saying maybe.

“.....First, let me ask you one thing. Minjoon, are you perhaps able to not only read the composition of the ingredients, but also the proportion?”

“There is more information than you think in the dish.”

Jo Minjoon said with a calm voice. At his words, even Joseph could hang his mouth absentmindedly. It wasn't enough with just reading the ingredients, but he could also guess the proportions? It

was a nonsense ability. Maybe, if they even knew that Jo Minjoon could read the recipe as it was, then they would get angrier rather than surprised.

“.....The head chefs must be cautious of you in whatever restaurant you go to.”

“Why?”

“Because you can be the worst spy in the business.”

At those words, Jo Minjoon just laughed without saying anything back. Alan couldn't turn away his gaze from him, and moved his steps with difficulty. Because they had to go with the other participants too. Emily cautiously opened her mouth at the last moment.

“It seems like there's one more reason I should get closer with you.”

“There's nothing bad for a chef to get along with an epicurean.”

“Again, drawing the line. The offer from back then, i'm not planning to force you. So don't act so cautiously.”

After Emily said that, she smiled brightly and left the place. Even if the judges were there or not, what Jo Minjoon had to do was still the same. To stir for the apple to not get burnt, and prepare the sudachi curd.

The first thing he had to do was to disinfect the sudachi. He had to rub the sudachi with baking soda and a little bit of water until foam came out, and after that he had to rub with thick salt and

repeat the process. And after that, putting it in boiling water for 10 seconds, the job would be done.

The reason he used fresh sudachi instead of sudachi juices was because he needed the sudachi zest. After only slicing the green part thinly, Jo Minjoon started to beat the eggs in a bowl. It was one egg for one sudachi. He put a pinch of salt on the beaten eggs, and after pouring sugar as much as the beaten eggs, he only had to put in the sudachi juice. It didn't only give it flavor, but the components sudachi had would make the eggs creamy.

After that, he checked the state of the apple again. The apples were quite soft. As he pressed with the rice scoop, the apples would crumble without strength. Jo Minjoon boiled water to poach the sudachi curd and finish mashing the apples. After placing cotton cloth in another bowl and pouring apple juice, he felt the aroma of the apples and sugar were so strong that it hurt your nose. And the hot steam that surged out wasn't pleasant.

After tying the ends of the cotton cloth carefully, he just had to slowly wait for the apple juice to flow out. If he squeezed it so hard like you did it with katsuobushi, then the contents on the cotton cloth would flow less than normal. He had to slowly wait for the juice to flow for a clean texture.

After that, he put pectin powder in it and boiled it down, and then freezing it was the end. While the juices boiled down, it was the time for the sudachi custard again. Jo Minjoon placed a stainless bowl on top of the boiling pot, and started to poach the beaten eggs and sudachi water in it. If the temperature was too high, then the eggs would just cook like that. Poaching was the

easiest and safest method.

Only stirring with the rice scoop for the curd to not press down took 10 minutes. As he slightly touched the part of the jelly, the end parts trembled. It meant that it was finished. Jo Minjoon put down the rice scoop and put the jelly in the freezer.

As he returned to the countertop, he pressed the curd that was in the rice scoop, and it hardened with the shape it was pressed. It meant that it was completed. After Jo Minjoon put down the bowl on top of the pot, he put in the sudachi zest and butter and slowly mixed it. Because it was still hot, the butter melted easily. The zest didn't, because it was sliced in short slices. The color was the same, so a sleek sudachi curd was completed. Jo Minjoon savored the green curd with his heart beating.

“.....Good.”

It was to the point he exclaimed in admiration like that. Sweet and sour. Those short three words could explain it all. The sudachi was covering the sweet flavor of the sugar. When it met the green apple jelly, the aroma of the melted caramel inside of it and the aroma of the apple would combine and make a perfect combination.

Actually, he had somewhat guessed the result without even tasting it.

[Sudachi Curd]

Freshness: 94%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 7/10



# Chapter 72: Footprints In Front Of His Feet

## (3)

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A 7-points curd. For a curd to have that score, it was being perfect. It was to the point that he thought if it was possible to make something beyond that. Jo Minjoon looked at the clock with a confident face. 50 minutes. There were still 1 hour and 10 minutes left. And, what he had to do right now, was to rest for an hour. Because he could finish his dish in 20 minutes and still have spare time. Looking at Jo Minjoon being still, the judges approached him.

“Minjoon. Why are you standing still?”

“Because I have to wait for 50 minutes.”

He said it bluntly. Emily asked with a perplexed voice.

“Do you mean that you have nothing to do for 50 minutes?”

“Yes. Oh, but just because of that, it doesn’t mean that I could have chose the one hour time.”

“.....I understand that. But are you really planning to rest for 50 minutes?”

“I think that it’s not only me doing that.”

Jo Minjoon said that while slightly glancing at his surroundings. It was just as he had said. Even Sasha had spare time because she was waiting for the bread to ferment. Alan let out a sigh.

“It seems like there isn’t going to be any funny scenes.”

“We don’t know. Maybe Martin will get to know the aesthetics of slowness.”

Emily shrugged her shoulders. Joseph didn’t say anything and looked down at his sudachi curd, and lifted a small spoon of it.

“The flavor of the curd, can I try it?”

“Of course.”

There was no need to evaluate. The sudachi curd he made right now was of a better quality than those he had previously made. Of course, the cooking score was the same 7 points as now, but even the particles of this curd were beautiful. It was quite well poached.

Joseph ate a bite and then, closed his eyes and savoured it. And after that he put a soft smile.

“I will be expecting it.”

Alan and Emily took out their spoons with faces that wanted to eat it. Jo Minjoon just served the curd in front of them without saying anything. And after they ate it, they were putting the same face as Joseph. Alan’s corner of his mouth raised.

“I remember that Dave spent a few months to make the sudachi magnificently. You stole those months in just a moment.”

“Because cooking is everyone’s.”

Jo Minjoon said that and smiled brightly. Alan looked at him with a face you couldn't know what he was thinking. He seemed to want to say something, but turned back. Jo Minjoon glanced slightly at his surrounding. The situation for those who chose the two hours was different. In the case of Joanne she seemed to be busy because she was making chocolate cream to put in the cheesecake, but just as the judges had said, Sasha was just waiting for the bread to ferment.

But the one who who had the most leisure was Jo Minjoon. He didn't really have anything to do. Although he had to roast the cashew nuts and parboil the celery before the jelly got hard, it was better the later he did it.

The time passed slowly, but without rest. The ones who chose the one hour time also started cooking, and Sasha too put her dough in the oven and started the finishing steps.

Jo Minjoon started to move only when there were ten minutes left. He quickly roasted the cashew nuts in the frying pan, and parboiled the celery. And he put the peeled pear in sugar water and simmered it. There was no need to put it for long. When the sweet flavor of the pear seemed to mix with the sugar sufficiently, that was the time when it suited well with the other ingredients.

And after that, there wasn't even 5 minutes left. However Jo Minjoon didn't hurry. Because if he did the finishing touch, he would finish. He went to the freezer and brought the jelly. A transparent and yellow jelly wriggled like pudding.

And the cooking score was 7. When he slightly ate the end parts of it, the jelly was tough but not enough to exhaust your mandible and at the same time had a soft texture.

A smile naturally formed in Jo Minjoon's mouth. Perhaps, it could become the best dessert he had ever made.

To remove the deducting points while copying a recipe, naturally, there couldn't be flaws in the process of poaching or freezing. And although he had a time limit today, he had concentrated more than ever and cooked without mistakes. Perhaps, perhaps.

‘Perhaps the same flavor I ate there could appear.’

Jo Minjoon's eyes were filled with desire. He still couldn't forget the emotions he got when he made the 8 points risotto. Just as the customers eat your food deliciously, making a high quality dish was also a happy thing.

Jo Minjoon put the sudachi curd on a plate with a round and concave center. And he also put the round jelly on top of that. He placed the celery in a snake like shape after slicing it in half, he grounded the cashew nuts and put it on top and then placed the simmered pears and nastrium. And it was at that moment.

Jo Minjoon put the sudachi curd on a plate with only its center round and concave.

[You have perfectly reproduced the recipe.]

[Sudachi curd with green apple jelly]

Freshness: 97%

Origins: (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality: High

Cooking Score: 8/10

“Yes.....!”

Jo Minjoon opened his mouth unconsciously. His heart beat. When he tasted the sudachi curd he thought that it was good, but he never thought that it would end up being 8 points. Because when he practiced alone, it was difficult to get a score above 7.

Jo Minjoon slowly took in some breaths and looked at the clock. The time was almost up. Three, two, one... and Joseph yelled.

“Time is over! Everybody put your hands off.”

There was no one who couldn't complete their dishes. But of course, it didn't mean that they all had satisfying results. Jo Minjoon slightly glanced at Peter. In his dish, there was apple pure and baked apple. The appearance seemed quite delicious, but you couldn't know how it was in reality.

Joseph opened his mouth.

“Are you all satisfied at the results?”

“Yes, chef.”

“We looked at you cooking and picked the three dishes we expect the most. And the one we are going to call right now is the one we worry, expect, and are the most curious about. Minjoon! Come to the front please.”

It wasn't really unexpected. Because he still remembered the faces of the judges when he said that he could also guess the proportions of the ingredients. Jo Minjoon went to the judges with a calm face and with his dish. Just placing one dish was enough to fill the small table in front of them. Joseph got in front first.

“Minjoon. Explain your dish.”

“I placed sudachi curd and green apple jelly together. I roasted and grounded cashew nuts for the crispiness. I brought out more of the sour and sweet flavor through a moderately simmered pear in sugar water, and deepened the aroma with nastrium.”

“You said that you have reproduced the dessert in Rose Island, when you recently went there. Ah, there's no need to point that out. Because imitation is the basics for cooking. Even when Kaya reproduced Alan's risotto, I have said nothing. Do you remember?”

“Yes. I do.”

“If you have correctly imitated the flavor you ate there, with just that, there will be worth in your dish. Are you confident?”

Jo Minjoon smiled instead of replying and pushed the dish slightly towards Joseph. He looked at Jo Minjoon's eyes at that moment, and lifted his fork and knife and sliced the jelly. He smeared enough sudachi curd, smeared cashew nuts in that curd and placed a pear on top of the fork.

And that went in his mouth just like that. Joseph slowly opened his mouth. Honestly, he was a little preoccupied. Because there were many cases when you made jelly, that if you made a mistake it would turn a rubber and without flavor. Also, it had the tendency to not suit very well with other ingredients.

The first thing he felt was the refreshing flavor of the sudachi curd. And the cashew nuts that were smeared in the curd, got grounded in his teeth and the oil that came out of it made it heavy.

The pear originally doesn't have sourness, but the short time it was simmered in sugar water made the sourness disappear and it didn't disturb the flavor of the sudachi curd at all. In the middle of that, the combination caramel and apple that was felt from the jelly made him clearly feel the ability Jo Minjoon had. He felt the spicy flavor of the nastrium at the last, and Joseph let out a sigh of amazement.

"This.....Is really similar to Dave's jelly. And the curd is also similar. Really..... You really reproduced that flavor. It was to the point I felt chills down my spine."

"Thank you."

"Maybe, if you put in a little bit more of an ingredient, the balance would have crumbled. And that would have ended as a piece of sugar. Minjoon, your talent surprises more and more. And maybe I should call it skill instead of talent. Even if you did know the recipe and the flavor, to reproduce it this much is clearly your own strength. It was a good dessert. Thank you."

Joseph talked like that and fell back. This time, Alan stepped to the front. He tried to eat slowly as usual, but his hands were faster

than usual. After he ate the jelly without saying anything, he let out a hopeless laugh.

“I’m curious about how David will feel after looking at the broadcast. I will say something to him.”

Alan looked at the camera.

“This doesn’t fall back at all compared to yours.”

—

“Incredible. You are really incredible. Minjoon.”

Interview. Martin said while holding Jo Minjoon’s hands. Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly and took out his hands. Martin looked at him with shining eyes.

“Where did you say you came from, Korea? Aren’t you lying? Aren’t you an angel that came down from heaven?”

“.....Let’s proceed with the interview.”

“Whew, yes. I’m sorry. I got excited. So how do you feel? You became one of the remaining 10 people”

At Martin’s question, Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly. He said with a voice that wasn’t bright nor dark.



“It would be a lie if I wasn’t happy, but I can’t feel that happy. Because two of the people I used to hang with left.”

“Peter and Leslie..... It has plenty of meaning for them to have reached to this point.”

“I wonder. Even though it may have some meaning to Leslie, but I think that this trip was more of a loss for Peter.”

Leslie from the two hours one, and Peter from the one hour. Peter’s dish was full of sweetness and lacked sourness. It was because he simmered it in sugar for too long, and cooked it for too long. Jo Minjoon said with a regretful voice.

“In the end, Peter left without being able to spread his wings.”

“Do you think that it was cruel?”

“I wonder. Actually, I think that he reaped the fruits of his actions. Not being able to show his skills properly, and not being able to control what he said was also his responsibility. It’s just regretful.”

“All the competitions are like that. Because in the end, only one can laugh in the end. Do you think that you will be able to become that person?”

“.....Honestly speaking, I think that I have to grow more. In this situation, even if I win, it will not be a real victory. I’m planning to improve the most in the remaining time.

At his words, Martin didn’t say anything and just looked at him. Martin seemed to be hesitating for a moment, but soon asked with a silent voice.

“Don’t take it bad. Honestly speaking, I hope that you survive for long. But I don’t want you to win.”

Taking into account that the PD had said that, it was too direct. Jo Minjoon’s face turned strange. It was Martin that had said that he wanted Jo Minjoon to win. Of course, he could see it as a service comment, but he couldn’t know the reason why he was talking like this. Martin continued speaking.

“It’s not because I think that you are lacking or I don’t like you. If you win in this competition, you will be called for events for a year. You will get busy.”

“What do you mean?”

“.....We are preparing a program that is going to be the continuation of Grand Chef. The theme is tasting travelling. I was thinking to connote Emily, but she refused. However a month ago, she told me that if I satisfied one of her request, she will participate. And that was you participating in it.”

Jo Minjoon let out a sigh unconsciously. Emily had approached him that time, but he didn’t know that she had asked for that kind of request. Martin hurriedly continued to say.

“Of course, aside from Emily participating, I think that your character as a chef is very good. People will go crazy if a person with an absolute sense of taste is doing a tasting travel. I assure you.”

“.....So that means that if I get eliminated, you will let me participate. Is it that kind of offer?”

“I’m not planning to listen to your reply right now. Think about

it plentifully. I need to give you that much of a consideration. Of course.”

Martin laughed.

“Although, it will become a story that never happened if you win.”

# Chapter 73: Unexpected Collaboration (1)

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#Grand Chef season 3, who's going to be first place among the viewers?

Maybe if you asked people to name the hottest TV show right now, they wouldn't even hesitate at naming Grand Chef. The average viewers surpassed 5 million, and at times passed 7 million. These results made this program as the top one, and had even surpassed the results of the past season.

What could be the cause for that? Could the compositions of the missions have been better than the previous ones? No. Although the food truck mission that was broadcasted yesterday was something that wasn't there previously, the rating was good even before that so it couldn't have been the cause.

Season 3 was faring better than the previous seasons because of the participants. Precisely speaking, it was because of a few special participants. It was to the point that there was word that Grand Chef season 3 was blessed by God among the viewers. It meant that there were many participants with starships.

First, there was Anderson Rousseau. This man that emanated confidence from the start, was recently shown to the public that he was the son of Fabio Rousseau and Amelia Rousseau. Right. Michelin three stars 'Glutto.' The owners were his chef parents.

Anderson Rousseau made people grow curious. He was excessively skilled to be called an amateur, and at the same time

had a deep comprehension towards cooking. It was to the point that when he was standing in front of the countertop putting a confident air, charisma could be felt from him. So because of that, the news about his family was shocking and incomprehensible.

Kaya Lotus was the exact opposite of Rousseau. This poor and pitiful cinderella that had to help her mother in the market with only having graduated in primary school, was the participant that got more attention than any other.

And it wasn't because she had a pitiful background. She had the roughest and foulest mouth compared to any other participant, and that made people criticize her.

Regardless of her attitude, the reason she had many fans was because of her looks, but more so because of her abilities. The dishes that this little girl that just became an adult were all dishes you needed to be skilled. Especially, when she showed direct fire cooking, the fans gave her an embarrassing nickname, the fire chef.

The character Lotus had wasn't only of a kid that was raised in an unlucky environment and that of a genius girl. The participant she got along with, Jo Minjoon, made various dramatic occasions that made even the viewers flustered. Perhaps, he only appeared because of the director, or it was really by coincidence. The important thing was that the participants were really interested in the love between them.

And the hope of the participants wasn't in vain. Lotus usually had an attacking and mean attitude, but if there was a person she

could lower her defenses with, it was good to see. That subtle atmosphere among them made the viewers cheer for them, but the reason those cheers erupted was because of what happened just recently.

Precisely speaking, it was about the 4th of May. 4th of May, Grand Chef's rating surpassed 7 million viewers. It was because Minjoon's absolute sense of taste was hidden well and appeared as a surprise gift in front of the viewers. The reactions of the viewers about that could be easily explained. Actually, the video about Jo guessing all 20 ingredients right had surpassed 30 million views.

Originally, the relationship with Minjoon and Lotus could be seen of that as a genius and a culprit. However, the moment Jo showed his geniusness, the people couldn't accept the relationship of those two as normal. The making of a genius with another genius made you immersed more than necessary, beautified, and expected it.

And that expectation would return as Grand Chef's rating. Of course, that rating wouldn't simply be related to those who enjoy cooking, but even so the value didn't change. That tendency would be maintained by those three people, and the throne wouldn't shake during that time.

But there was one problem that remained. Maybe, if Grand Chefs popularity was because of a few participants, when they get eliminated one by one, would the rating fall or rise?

“.....Eliminated.”

On the blanket. Jo Minjoon was looking with a strange expression at his handphone. It wasn't that an article was written about something that didn't exist until now, or that he had made a particular reasoning. However, he thought of that unnecessarily. The back of Peter and the eliminated people. And he saw himself instead of those people.

It was all because of Martin. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. After Martin's strange offer, even if he didn't try to, he ended up thinking about the tasting travel. An insurance has just appeared. The insurance that didn't matter if he got eliminated. He didn't even know if he had to be happy or not.

After worrying, he only got hungrier. Jo Minjoon went to the kitchen.

After Peter got eliminated after the last mission, a week had already passed. However, he still didn't hear news about the next mission. Jo Minjoon seemed to know what the next mission was going to be. Although he couldn't perfectly know the order of the missions, he did remember the exceptional ones. Precisely speaking, the missions which Kaya had a huge role in it. Because he also watched the edited parts about Kaya.

In the case of the risotto mission, he didn't remember it. Precisely speaking, it was a mission he didn't remember well. Perhaps, Kaya could have chose the other dish, or originally,

another mission could have carried out.

However, this mission was too big and charming for it to change because of a variable like Jo Minjoon. He thought that the directors shouldn't have changed it.

“Did you just get up?”

“It's been a while.”

There was only Anderson in the kitchen. It was understandable. Because it wasn't even 7 in the morning. The people who would get up at this time, or precisely speaking the ones who would get up and come to the kitchen were only Kaya or Chloe. Chloe had the habit to exercise in the morning, and Kaya got the habit of waking early because she used to work in the market. Of course, it seemed like she wanted to get revenge to that kind of lifestyle, but there were many cases where she slept late in purpose.

“What are you making?”

“Potato gnocchi gratin.”

“.....In this morning?”

Anderson just shrugged his shoulders. Well, he would want to eat something heavy since morning. Jo Minjoon didn't keep refuting. Anderson signaled the pantry with his eyes.

“There were new vegetables that entered this morning. You, too, make something with that.”

“Oh, really?”



Just like Anderson said, he couldn't see vegetables which freshness was below 90%.

‘I want to eat some noodles.’

However, pasta didn't attract him. He didn't want to eat with oil or sauce. But to eat pasta in a champon style, he preferred eating other noodles rather than eating pasta with soup.

At that time, what caught his attention was dried udon noodles and rice noodles. Jo Minjoon's eyes shook between the two. The style of noodle he liked was udon, but he liked the soup of the rice noodles better.

In the end, what he chose was the rice noodles. Because you could feel the flavor of the vegetables more freshly that way. Udon was a dish in which the noodles were the main however you made it. On the other hand, you could enjoy the vegetables and the noodles with rice noodles. But of course, onions, japanese parsley, green bean sprouts, and coriander was everything. These were all things Jo Minjoon liked. He didn't even dislike coriander. It simply had a special aroma, and he didn't dislike it until now.

You used a lot of ingredients taking into account that you were going to make a simple rice noodles: brisket of beef and meat gravy, green bean sprouts, herbs and scallions, green chili, coriander, radish, ginger, onions, and lime juice. Aside from that, fish sauce, sriracha chili sauce, hoisin sauce, etc.

The biggest reason people didn't make rice noodles much in their houses was because of this. It was also because you needed many ingredients, but in the case of fish sauce, normally you wouldn't even buy it if you weren't interested in it. On top of that, there were many cases that you bought it but didn't know where else use it aside from rice noodles. Of course, you could use sea food sap instead of fish sauce, but the flavor could only be different.

The biggest reason people didn't make rice noodles much in their houses was because you needed many ingredients, but in the case of fish sauce, normally you wouldn't even buy it if you weren't interested in it.

After putting the rice noodles in the water, he put in the vinyl on the gravy. Normally, he would also need to boil the cow legs, but it would be quite weird to put in that much effort just to eat breakfast. Jo Minjoon poured the gravy in the pot along with onions and ginger and boiled it. After removing the blood of the brisket of beef, he slightly parboiled it and put it with the gravy.

He didn't make pickled onions. Although you wouldn't know how it would be felt for the natives, it was too strong of a flavor for Jo Minjoon. Because rather than harmonizing with the other ingredients, it ate all of the flavor alone. It was the same feeling as eating normal jajangmyeon with pickled radish that was ten times saltier.

It was at that moment when he wanted to put in the fish sauce, salt, and pepper in the gravy that Chloe got in the kitchen wearing sport clothes. She had her hair that was shoulder long, and was taking in some breaths with her cheeks flushed. But it didn't seem like she was sweating because the weather was still too cold to sweat. Jo Minjoon asked with a calm voice.

She had her shoulder-length hair tied, and was taking a breather while her cheeks were flushed red.

“Did you finish your morning exercise?”

“Yes. But as I was jogging the front garden, I saw a strange person. He was hanging on the fences and taking pictures of the insides”

“.....Again a reporter?”

Nowadays, many reporters have been chased away trying to come in to Grand Chef’s house. It was understandable. Just like paparazzis that stick to the stars are numerous, the broadcasting star being Grand Chef, there’s no way reporters wouldn’t come knowing the place of the broadcast. Chloe shook her head as if she was sick of it.

“I don’t know. He did get caught by the security and got all of his pictures erased, but I also started to get uncomfortable and came back. But what are you making? It smells good.”

“Rice noodles.”

“Oh, you are making the soup.”

“Rice noodles was better with soup than without. Do you want to eat? It’s almost done. And there’s a lot. It will be for about 3 or 4 people.”

“Then, I will bother you with just one dish.”

Chloe smiled brightly and held her hands. Jo Minjoon slightly looked at the hall. It was time for Kaya to come out, but he couldn’t see a trace of her. Did she sleep late again for the

deviation? While he was thinking like that, Kaya tied her disheveled hair, and came to the kitchen with a scoop neck t-shirt and crumpled short pants.

Chloe looked at Kaya's hair with shining eyes. She liked disheveled hair styles very much. Because she tried hard to get that hair style on purpose even after having washed her hair. Jo Minjoon laughed.

“Kaya. You promised me to make breakfast for me everyday.”

“I don't think that we agreed at what time. It isn't even 8:30.”

At Kaya's discontent face, Jo Minjoon smirked. Honestly he wanted to tell her to not sleep. Anderson, who had finished his potato gnocchi gratin, looked at them.

“Is there anyone that wants to eat gratin?”

“I pass. I don't want to get a stomachache again after eating cheese.”

As Jo Minjoon replied like that, Anderson's corner of his mouth was lifted as if he was disappointed. Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders and continued to say.

“I can't do anything about it. As I age, I can't digest cheese as before.”

“.....You are still 21?”

“But it's also true that i'm not at the growing phase, but the aging phase. It's certainly different from when I was a teen. Also, cheese

doesn't suit much with my constitution."

Anderson looked back sharply and ate the gnocchi and cheese he made. The gnocchi that was made along with cream sauce had a similar sticky texture to ongsimi, but it was even softer than that. Chloe raised her hand as if she couldn't hold it anymore.

"Anderson. I'm eating."

".....Right."

While that was happening, the rice noodles was being finished. Jo Minjoon poured the gravy in the rice noodles and placed the green bean sprouts, onions, red chili, and coriander. If he put lime, hoisin sauce, or chili sauce in another plate and then serve, it was the end.

Maybe it was because of the smell while he was cooking it that he got hungrier. He did drink the soup with the excuse of tasting the seasoning, but it only made him hungrier.

However, he felt that if he ate right now, he would eat it more deliciously than ever. The four people sat in the table. In that time, Kaya made a simple japanese egg roll and placed it on the table. Kaya snorted and said.

"Egg rolls. I made you breakfast."

"Just say so."

At Kaya's short reply, Anderson, too, turned his head. It was a

little awkward, but Jo Minjoon didn't mind. It became awkward between them since the team mission they did and they fought. So there was no reason to feel any different.

Jo Minjoon slowly put the rice noodles in his mouth. The soup was hot, but the noodles were put in cold water so there was no need to blow air to cool it down. The aroma of the gravy, along with the aroma of coriander, mixed strongly and pinched his nose. 9 in 10 people in Korea didn't like coriander, but fortunately, Jo Minjoon was the remaining one person.

They said that the more excessive the flavor, the more pleasant it was. Could it be called as a violent aroma? Because it wasn't only the nose, but the ceiling of the mouth also seemed to be conquered by that aroma.

The bean sprouts that were chewed crunchy, and the texture of the rice noodles that softened your tongue and lips was also beautiful. The cooking score was 7. Nowadays, it was more difficult to get a 6-point dish. It wasn't so difficult to make a 7-point dish if you were loyal to the standards. If it was a recipe that had a limit when made with the standards, if you reformed it a little bit, getting 7 points was easy.

‘Perhaps I am close to reaching cooking level 7.’

As he ate while thinking like that, the same rice noodles were felt more deliciously. Kaya slightly looked at Jo Minjoon's smile and opened her mouth.

“It’s delicious.”

“Me too.”

“Thank you.”

At Chloe’s words that talked after Kaya, Jo Minjoon smiled and replied. Jo Minjoon drank a spoon of soup and opened his mouth.

“When will we doing the mission?”

“I wonder. Maybe they will throw us the mission as a surprise gift.”

“I hope it’s not a mission like the food truck one. It was fun, but it was also that hard.”

“I agree.”

It was at that time. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon and opened her mouth.

“Do you want to bet?”

“What kind of bet?”

“What’s going to be the theme of the mission. The one who gets it right is the one who wins. The prize..... If I win, let’s cancel breakfast. If you win, I will also make you lunch. How about it?”

“.....You do know that gamblers ruin their lives and choose a normal route, right?”

“Shut up. Are you going to or not? Why, you aren’t confident?”

Looking that she was putting a smile was obvious that she wanted to provoke him. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth while

laughing inwardly.

“What do you think it will be?”

“We are 10. If we split in two we are exactly 5, so it’s going to be a team mission. Oh, also as I said it first, you have to pick something different.”

“Okay. I will. I will bet on an individual mission.”

“.....Really?”

Kaya looked at him with dubious eyes. It seemed like she wasn’t comfortable that he agreed to it so easily. Jo Minjoon just laughed. According to his memories when there were ten people remaining, it wasn’t going to be a team mission. Precisely speaking, there was only one team mission after the top 10 were confirmed. And he still remembered the scene where ten dishes were put in the table at the same time. If his memories didn’t fail him, then this mission was probably going to be.....

‘Buffet.’



## Chapter 74: Unexpected Collaboration (2)

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Jo Minjoon's memories weren't wrong. At midday, the staff called all the participants. In the kitchen, there were the long-awaited judges standing. When the opening words ended, Alan announced the theme.

“The theme of this mission will be ‘buffet’.”

At Alan's plain voice, Kaya raised the corner of her mouth as if she had won. And it was understandable because when you said buffet, it gave you more of an impression that it was going to be a team mission. However, Alan didn't finish speaking.

“You will each have to make one dish. Tomorrow at night, the townspeople will come here to eat, and you will have to make a dish that catches their hearts. So you will have to get their, and our votes. The food will not be served by the customers, but you will have to serve the quantity we fixed. 10 points for one vote, and we will add that to the amount of times your food was served. The two with the lowest score will have to part with us.”

Kaya's eyes were filled with disbelief and just stared at Alan's mouth. At that time, Alan looked at her eyes and flinched. He didn't know why but her eyes were so savage she seemed to be looking at an irreconcilable enemy. Alan looked away. Joseph laughed and opened his mouth.

“What you have to take into account in this mission will not only be the turnover. Probably you will realize that before you leave.

You are free to cook whatever you want. You should have felt it in the food truck mission, but for these kinds of missions, the first button has to fit well. Because according to what you have planned, at that time, the victory and defeat would already have been decided.”

“Think smart. At the same time, aside from the mission, remember the customers that would eat your dish. I hope that it doesn’t become food for the mission, but a dish meant for them. I will pray for a good fight.”

With Emily’s words, the announcement of the mission ended. Jo Minjoon pushed Kaya with his shoulder. Kaya looked at him up and down with sharp eyes. He didn’t really like that eye motion, but he didn’t know why he didn’t detest it.

“Well? It seems like you are also going to make lunch for me.”

“.....Shut up, pig.”

“Why are you calling me pig again? Last time you said that I was too frail.”

“If you eat lunch with breakfast then you are a pig.”

“I think that you, too, ate your three meals.”

Kaya didn’t say anything and just poked the floor with her feet. Jo Minjoon smirked and said.

“If you really not want to, then I can take it back?”

“Who asked you to do so? I lived without much, but I have never lived breaking promises.”

“Aside from that, today’s breakfast was too poor.”

“You woke up way too early.”

Kaya said with a discontent face as if it was unfair. She started to count with her finger and soon opened her mouth.

“It’s been 21 times. I couldn’t make you breakfast at the team mission because I was busy, I could only not make it to you at the food truck mission, so it’s 21 times. I have cooked for you 21 times. So didn’t I treat you well if it’s this much?”

“Yes. Good job.”

“.....Always assenting so usually like that.”

It also felt good that she was biting her lips as if it was vexing, because she felt like a child. Of course, she usually didn’t show an adult side, but taking into account that she was a teen was a really cynical feeling. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was smiling. The staff yelled loudly.

“It’s the time for the middle interview! If you are named, then immediately come to the interview room!”

It didn’t take long until Jo Minjoon’s turn. Because he was the first to be called. In the interview room, Martin was smiling and looked at him.

“Have you been well?”

“Yes, well. It’s also hard to not be well if you had a pantry like this.”

A place with many ingredients was like heaven for people that knew how to cook. Martin nodded as if he understood.

“What do you think about the mission?”

“I did think that the buffet will come out at least once. I’m not that surprised.”

“Did you think of what you are going to cook? Oh, was it too short for you to have thought of something?”

“I did think of something. But i’m not certain yet. My choice will also change depending on what the other people cook.”

At those words, Martin smiled meaningfully. Jo Minjoon wasn’t a chef that simply had a sensitive sense of taste. He knew how to think. Because not too long after the mission was announced, he had already figured it out.

“You are intelligent. I really didn’t think that you will be able to understand this mission so soon.”

“Because it’s simple. Customers don’t only eat my food. They eat the food of the other participants, and although we are not a team, I have to look for a combination among those.”

Normally, what people looked for the most in a buffet was meat. Be it fish meat, or normal meat, it didn’t matter. However, what would happen if 9 out of 10 dishes had an oily meat in it, and in the remaining one a dish with clean vegetables? Although it will get less votes compared to the meat, the speed it gets empty will be faster than any other.

And it didn't take long for everyone to notice that. But it wasn't that they noticed it either. After the interview ended, Sasha gathered everyone to the 4th floor lobby. She had a ring shaped pad on top of her dark skin and had long hair. Sasha opened her mouth.

“I think that we need have to have a discussion.”

“What kind of discussion?”

“About the menu. If we decide on the menu without any discussions everyone can present pasta, or a situation where 10 desserts are presented can also happen. And maybe, even the cooking can be similar. Don't you think that those kind of things shouldn't happen?”

“I agree.”

Jo Minjoon nodded and said. As he looked at his surroundings, it seemed like there was no one who was opposed to Sasha's words. Sasha took in a breath as if she was a little nervous and continued speaking.

“I'll tell you beforehand that I'm planning to make a dessert. Strawberry chiffon cake. Can you all tell me what you are going to cook?”

Some were hesitating for a moment, but they couldn't be silent by themselves. Everyone opened their mouths and started to think the dishes they had thought of. Mapo tofu for Chloe, tiramisu for Marco, and eggplant lasagna for Anderson. The others named their dishes as if they didn't decide it yet. Jo Minjoon too opened his mouth.

“I’m thinking to make a chicken dish. But I haven’t decided on what.”

Precisely speaking, he was thinking about making fried chicken and dak galbi. He felt it in the food truck mission, but the viewers had a tendency to expect Asian foods. It couldn’t be helped because Jo Minjoon was still Asian. He wasn’t Asian American, but a person that really came after living there, so it wasn’t excessive asking for foreign cooking.

However, being foreign and suiting their tastes at the same time wasn’t an easy thing to do. Being foreign meant that they weren’t accustomed to, and being not accustomed to meant that it would be easier to feel rejection. Wasn’t pasta in Korea made with cream sauce rather than oil or cheese? If they presented traditional pasta, the flavor was too clean and simple or flat. Or if there was too much cheese, it felt too greasy.

With that in mind, thinking about making fried chicken or dak galbi was quite the problem. It wasn’t a problem suiting the tastes, but the problem was in which side could give a deeper and charming flavor.

‘.....Should dak galbi be better?’

In the first place, the experience was different. He hadn’t cooked much in his house because the oil was fastidious to handle. In the other side, he made and cooked dak galbi whenever he thought of it, so the experience could only have a great difference.

As he looked at the other participants, they were trying hard to not present a dish with sauce for it not to overlap with the other dishes. What was fortunate was that among the ten people, only he wanted to cook a chicken dish. Chloe glanced at Jo Minjoon and asked.

“You still haven’t decided?”

“I have. I’m planning to go with dak galbi.”

“Oh, I also like that. It would be fine. How are you planning to make the sauce? With soy sauce or Gochujang?”

“There’s already a spicy sauce in your mapo tofu. So if I put in gochujang the flavor would overlap a little. What I’m thinking is putting apple vinegar and ginger, simmering the chicken in soy sauce, and giving it a spicy flavor with chili powder. Of course, if you just eat it alone the flavor would be too strong, so i’m planning to also serve rice.”

“Ugh, just listening at it makes me drool.”

Chloe talked like that and laughed while pressing the corner of her lips with both of her thumbs. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“How about evaluating each other’s dishes? I think we need to eat it.”

“Good for me.”

“I’m also in.”

Kaya appeared out of nowhere and opened her mouth. She looked at Jo Minjoon and pouted.

“We have an absolute sense of taste right next to it, so we have to make good use of it.”

Kaya’s voice rough and clear just as her way of talking. To the point it could be heard by everyone. The other participants too looked at Jo Minjoon. And he laughed awkwardly.

“I have a small stomach.”

—

With the strength of starch, the sticky red sauce stuck in his tongue. When the spicy sauce and oyster sauce mixed and the sweet and provocative aroma rose from his mouth to his nose, the tofu that was softer than the sauce crumbled on his tongue. The meat of the front pork leg that was sliced in a long way had a right amount of fat and was chewed with a good feeling. It wasn’t greasy nor hard. The breed of the pork was also a factor, but it was a flavor you could feel the skills of the one that cooked it. But...

“It’s delicious, but I think that the aroma of the ginger is a bit strong. And the spiciness is too strong. People who like it would like it but.....you know? That in this mission you need to get the good opinions of all the people you can.”

“.....Mmm, I think that I will have to catch the stench of the pork with refined rice wine instead of ginger. I understood. Thank you. I’m sorry but can I ask you one more question?”

“Yes, ask me.”



“What’s the score?”

At Chloe’s question, Jo Minjoon just smiled and looked at her. Chloe blushed as if she was embarrassed.

“I also know that it’s not a good habit to be asking the score. And I also heard that the cooking score didn’t determine the value of that food. But what can I do? I’m really curious.”

“It’s 7 points. It’s not your best, but even so it was delicious.”

“.....Mmm, I don’t know if I can feel at ease or not.”

Chloe tilted her head as if she was puzzled. Just like she had achieved in making various 8-point dishes, she was happy but also felt a bit of regret. But of course, the next problem would be something that had to be solved by Chloe herself.

The other participants also wanted to have their dishes evaluated. Although it was a competition, they didn’t want to be stingy with this much. Winning by doing well had a meaning, winning through another’s mistake wasn’t satisfactory at all. Even more if the customers were waiting. Some were stupid and naive, but Jo Minjoon wasn’t that kind of person.

After evaluating the dishes one by one, he served the dak galbi he made to everyone. He simmered the chicken leg meat in a sauce made with olive oil, garlic, ginger, chili powder, apple juice, ketchup, sugar, apple vinegar, and bean sauce and baked it in the oven.

The cooking score was 7. It was just as he had thought. Even if he tried every combination for the sauce, he still couldn't get an estimated score of 8. If he had that inspiration, wouldn't that day be the one which his cooking level rises to 7? Perhaps, it could simply be that he needed more skill. But whatever it was, the sure thing was that he needed to improve.

“How is it?”

“It's delicious?”

“It should be delicious. Because I feel that it's a 7-point dish. But something's lacking. What do you think?”

It was as usual, but pointing things out wasn't an easy thing to do. Everybody just looked at their faces with confused looks and couldn't open their mouths. It was at that moment. Kaya opened her mouth.

“You made this with only chicken leg meat, right?”

“Yes.”

“Then is there a need to simmer it in sauce? You ferment the sauce separately and boil it, then slightly roast the exterior of the meat and slowly boil down in the sauce. I think that then, the quality of the meat would be better and get more delicious. Anyways, it's chicken leg. There's no need to get softer.”

“That's also right.....”

Jo Minjoon said the end words in a dull manner and changed the recipe in his head. And it was at that moment. Jo Minjoon's face became absent minded. He thought if it could really happen. She had only said a few words. Really short words.

[The estimated cooking score is 8.]

## Chapter 75: Unexpected Collaboration (3)

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Just like Kaya had said, when he didn't simmer the chicken leg meat in the sauce, it became comparatively less soft. But just because of that, it didn't mean that it became worse. Rather, he could feel that the texture ripping more clearly. On top of that, the flavor he couldn't originally feel because of the sauce stimulated his tongue dimly.

[Soy sauce dak galbi]

Freshness : 93%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 8/10

Jo Minjoon laughed helplessly and looked the system window. He had never thought that he would be able to make an 8-point dish like this. Of course, in cooking if you followed the recipe well, half of the job was already done.....

“It's clearly more delicious than before.”

He put the new dak galbi in his mouth and nodded. The reactions of others weren't that different. Joanne said amazedly.

“This is just my style. The flavor of the chicken and the suit really suit each other.”

“Thanks.”

“.....uhh. Now that I think about it, it’s not the time to feel amazed. What is it, Minjoon? Why are you cooking so well nowadays?”

Jo Minjoon just smiled awkwardly instead of replying. Honestly, he too had felt that his skills were rising more and more. He felt less stifled than before, but there was still some anxiousness. Because cooking level 7 was just in front of his eyes. In the first place he wouldn’t even have looked at it if it was far away, but he felt more greed now that it was right in front of his eyes.

“Tomorrow will be war.”

“I wonder. If you made a dish that isn’t popular, even if you want to be busy, you won’t be able to. The side who can get that war-like atmosphere will be the winner that day.”

At Anderson’s words, everyone nodded. And everyone wished inwardly that although it would be hard, that they would be the side to be in a war.

—

Caprese. Arancini. Bruschetta. Broccoli soup. Eggplant lasagna. Mapo tofu. Dak galbi. Frittata. Strawberry chiffon cake. Tiramisu.

These are the dishes that the 10 people chose. The one the participants envied the most was Hugo. Caprese. It was a dish that finished after you cooked tomato and mozzarella cheese moderately and put basil on it. Excluding that, you had to cook the tomato appropriately, it wasn’t a difficult dish at all.

However, Hugo was the only one that made salad. Because honestly speaking, salad was a difficult dish to get many votes. Perhaps, if two people chose salad, it was almost certain that the two of them would get the lowest score.

In Kaya's case, it was rucula frittata, an italian omelette. Honestly speaking, frittata was a difficult dish to make it delicious. You bake the beaten eggs after putting meat and vegetables in it. If you said it like this, it was a really simple dish, but the more simple it was, the more difficult it was to give it flavor. However, it was with that meaning that she chose to do it.

Kaya's frittata was 8 points. After you put prosciutto ham, mozzarella cheese, mashed potatoes, rucula, basil, tarragon, etc. in the beaten eggs; put it in the oven; and fry shallots, garlic, peperoncino, etc. to make tomato sauce and pour it in, it was the end. However, it was the best frittata he had ever tried.

The day after the mission got announced, it was three in the afternoon. Everybody was preparing in the kitchen to the coming customers. The judges walked along with the participants and checked the situation of the cooking. Alan approached Jo Minjoon and opened his mouth.

“Minjoon, are your preparations going well?”

“The fermentation of the sauce is well done, there's no problem at all.”

“They told me that you said that your dak galbi was 8 points? It seems like I'm seeing more of it. Risotto and jelly, and the dak galbi

right now.”

“I can only improve. Because there are a lot of good chefs surrounding me. Actually, Kaya’s advice was really helpful in this recipe.”

At Jo Minjoon’s words, Alan put a smile you couldn’t know the meaning of. And he wasn’t so dull as to not know the meaning of it, so Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“Now even you, chef, see us that way?”

“Actually, this is the privilege of those surrounding you. If you didn’t want this, in the first place you shouldn’t have told your secret.”

“.....Let’s cook.”

“Good. You seem like a pro.”

Alan smirked and this time he went to Kaya. She had already put a pot in the oven, and was beating the eggs she was going to use next for quite a while. Normally, you didn’t do this work because it was bothersome, but if you did this step, the texture would become incomparably soft. Alan nodded and asked.

“What’s the ratio of the eggs and milk?”

“I put twice the milk than the eggs. Of course, if the eggs are a bit watery, I put less milk.”

“You are prudent. Kaya, I know that you didn’t learn cooking separately. I just know that you learnt cooking by watching in the market and that it was all..... So how did you master that small detail?

“Through my senses.”

Kaya replied shortly. Alan’s brows twitched. He opened his mouth again.

“But I think that you wouldn’t have done all of that through your senses alone. Don’t you have a case where someone taught you?”

“The market people. Of course, some had fine skills, but it was only for one or two things they knew. And there were mostly no aunties that cooked well, so I could only rely on my senses. In the first place, it isn’t that hard. If you make the dough, you put more water or milk, and if you pour hot water you feel the difference than when you pour cold water. And you would also feel how the inside was cooked when the exterior is being seared. Honestly, is there a need to separately learn? I don’t think so.”

“There aren’t cooking schools in vain.”

Kaya snorted instead of replying. Actually, she ignored the importance of learning, and with her environment, she could only do so more than normal because Kaya spent only 8 years as a student. And she didn’t have the leisure to properly learn something in those 8 years.

Perhaps, it isn’t that Kaya ignored the students, but mainly it was envy decorated as ignorance. At least, Alan saw it that way. Actually, those were words coming out from the viewers. Because they only saw her harsh attitude as a defense mechanism. Acting strong, acting as if she saw things through, admiring people her age that had a normal life, but couldn’t accept that for herself.



That sorry shape she showed could be one of the reasons she had fans, and not only anti's. Because to hate her, she seemed too weak at times. Alan let out a sigh inwardly. He understood her reaction. He also, one time.....

‘.....It's not the time to be thinking like this.’

“I will be expecting for good food.”

Alan ended the conversation formally and looked at the clock. 4:50. It was the time the customers would slowly come. He went to the stage in front of the kitchen where the judges were exchanging glances. Joseph raised his voice.

“After approximately 10 minutes, the customers will come. You will have to serve the customers that are going to keep coming for 3 hours. Are you ready?”

It was when they were about to say something. Across the kitchen's door, in the hall, footsteps and voices could be heard. Of course, there was no way that the staff would be making those noises in purpose. The customers have come. Jo Minjoon gulped and at the same time, Joseph yelled.

“Well, go and greet the customers!”

The 10 participants each carried their trays and went out to the hall. It was the time for victory and defeat.

Mila Quinn thought that she was an excellent epicurean. She ate all kinds of food, and could clearly feel the overall flavor of the food.

But the reason that it wasn't the present, but something from the past was simple. She couldn't feel the flavor like before. It wasn't that she got ill. When she reached her forties, just like everyone else, her sense of taste reduced. Compared to when she was young, even if she ate the same food, the flavor she felt was clearly different. And because of that, having a meal became more of a regretful time rather than a happy one.

But even so, the reason she came all the way here from a place 30 minutes away was simple. She was Jo Minjoon's and Kaya's fan. Precisely speaking, she was a fan that was enthusiastic of the sloppy romance scene Kaya and Minjoon showed.

Actually most of those who came here wasn't to eat their food, but to see the faces of both of them. It felt like an autograph session for the fans. As the door of the kitchen opened and saw the participants coming out to the hall, they felt so amazed and flustered.

Jo Minjoon felt more gentle than what you saw in TV. Could you say that he had the face of a school teacher? It was amazing that he could curse when he usually had that calm face. Because just looking at the face he had right now was enough to make the people that saw it to feel comfortable. Mila, too, had lived a long life. She knew how to read that side in people. He was a good person. She got that feeling instinctively.

In the other side, Kaya was different to Jo Minjoon. Although she didn't put on the smokey make up today, her eyes were still sharp and the corner of her lips were raised confidently, but it was trembling a little. It made you think that she was forcing it.

‘I think that both of them would suit each other really well.’

After she aged, she got an interest in others relationships. She knew that it was immodest, but she couldn't help but feel curious about it. Mila put a dense smile and looked at the both of them.

However, after the both of them explained their dishes, they returned back to the kitchen. Mila gulped down the regret and could only get the dishes they of them. Precisely speaking, she had to get the dish the staff had served.

Mila gulped down the regret and could only get the dishes they served.

The first thing she brought was Jo Minjoon's dak galbi. Jo Minjoon said that he had made with with korean cuisine as the basis, but she could also feel some japanese cuisine in it. Was it because he made it with soy sauce? It was at that moment when she ate a bite while thinking like that.

‘Huh?’

The face she was putting right now wasn't because she was satisfied or felt happy, rather, she was confused. She didn't get

surprised because it was delicious. It wasn't that it was disgusting, but precisely speaking, it was because of the clearness of that flavor. Mila lifted the chicken again with a dumbfounded face. She slightly smelled it and the aroma of ginger and a slightly sweet soy sauce tickled her nose.

A not-excessive salty flavor and a sweet flavor. However, the flavor of the sauce that touched her tongue was only the start. Just as chicken leg meat was soft, it was also a difficult part to feel the texture of it. But this wasn't it. The moment she ate a bite, the moist meat ripped like it was mozzarella. Originally, if you made it along with soy sauce the flavor of the chicken could only die, but that flavor was felt more clearly.

‘How long has it been? This flavor.’

In that moment, she got a chill down her spine. Mila shook her body. She thought that Jo Minjoon had a better sense of taste rather than being a good chef, but she had never imagined that he would be able to make this strong flavor. The flavor of ginger stimulated her tongue and made it sensitive, and she could also feel the balance which she originally couldn't have.

Could she feel consideration at them because of her age? Perhaps, it could be more of an interpretation of the dream rather than the dream itself, but whatever it was, what Mila was feeling right now was satisfaction in a long time. Mila smiled brightly and moved her eyes to Kaya's frittata.

Her chest beat. Like a girl that forgot her age.

“I ate well.”

An old woman that had blond hair smiled delicately. Her smile seemed so happy that Jo Minjoon smiled back.

“Thank you. Have a good day.”

“It’s a good time. Hold her tight.”

“.....I will interpret it as holding the knife.”

Excluding Jo Minjoon and Hugo, the ones who had their dishes refilled 4 times were Chloe, Kaya and Sasha. And the cooking score were all 8. In the case of Anderson, he too made an 8-point eggplant lasagna, but it was a dish that didn’t make you want to eat it much. And it was the same for Marco. The chocolate tiramisu he made was a dessert that nothing else to say. And the cooking score was also 8. However, the people who ate that greasy thing chose the fresh strawberry chiffon cake instead of the tiramisu. So Sasha could only get better scores.

‘According to the votes, there would be some changes.’

If you refilled once, it was about serving 20 dishes. 1 point for 1 dish. And 10 points for 1 vote. It could be seen you got two votes in one refill. Every hour, new customers entered, and the total amount was 500 people. If you at least got a tenth of the votes, you were safe from getting eliminated because the amount of dishes

the customers took was plenty. If there was an uneasy person, it would obviously be.....

‘Marco.’

Even if his votes was high, he thought that he had only refilled it twice. And the amount of dishes would be 50. Honestly, it wasn't that high of a score.

In the hall after the customer's left, Alan opened his mouth. It was a calm voice.

“The aggregation of the score ended.”

## Chapter 76: Unexpected Collaboration (4)

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Jo Minjoon gulped. Honestly speaking, he thought that there would be no way that he would get eliminated, but even so, he couldn't stop his heart from beating.

He slightly glanced at Marco, and he didn't look too good. Hugo that was next to him patted his back without any words. Emily said with a calm voice.

“After we announce the results, you will be divided in two classes. The surviving people, and those who couldn't. Is there anyone that thinks that they would get eliminated?”

At Emily's question, nobody replied. Because they didn't want to show an unconfident look. Emily nodded. For there to be silence at this kind of question was an obvious thing. It was at that moment when she was going to turn her head. Marco carefully raised his hand. Emily looked at Marco's face that didn't have a trace of laughter. Marco hesitated and said with a voice so low he seemed to be whispering.

“I think that I'll get eliminated.”

“.....Marco. It's true that your food was eaten by few people. But there are still the votes remaining. Why are you giving up already?”

“It's not that I'm not confident in my tiramisu. But everyone else are also good chefs. I don't think that I would get more votes than them. More than anything.....”

Marco smiled bitterly. He forced to speak with a calm voice.

“In the first place, I think that only half of the people that came ate it. And deducting the people that repeated it, they wouldn’t even be half of the half. I can’t help to think that I got more votes than them, from that minority.”

To tell him to get more confidence, it was really clear that he was acting really pessimistic. Emily’s light in her eyes subsided. The voice that came out from his mouth was even lower compared to usual.

“I understand that you are feeling down. But if you can maybe survive, how will you feel then?”

“First, I would feel good. And.....”

Marco stopped his words for a moment. He looked at the other participants. At Kaya, Jo Minjoon, Anderson..... Only after he looked at each of them one by one, he barely opened his mouth.

“I want to keep being with them. They were really good people in my life.”

“.....I also hope that you are able to.”

After Emily’s regretting voice, the conversation ended. Joseph coughed and looked at Alan. Alan looked at the card that was in his hand.

“Before announcing the results of the votes, and the amount of



times your food was eaten, we will first tell you the ones we voted for. First, I will tell you who I voted for.”

Alan hesitated for a moment. Jo Minjoon thought that at that moment, he had made eye contact with him, but the one Alan named wasn't him.

“Kaya. It's you.”

Kaya raised her brows. She looked at Alan as if it was unexpected. Alan said with a calm voice.

“I'm Italian. I know better than anyone else the flavor frittata originally needs to have. Kaya, you made me feel my hometown in this far away land. Honestly speaking, I'm surprised. You didn't get taught by an Italian chef.....No, thinking about it, you wouldn't even have gone to an Italian restaurant. I'm just surprised because you know what the ideal flavor of frittata is.”

Kaya silently listened to Alan, and then asked.

“You talked for really long so I didn't understand, but you praised me right now, right?”

“.....It's hundred percent a compliment.”

“Then thanks.”

The corner of her mouth raised. It was a provocative smile. ‘Nowadays teens are difficult.’ Alan thought like that and let out a sigh inwardly. He remembered his childhood. Would the people

that were looking at that time be feeling like him?

The atmosphere got awkward for a moment. Joseph slightly opened his mouth.

“It seems that it’s my turn. I have thought a lot between two people. It’s Sasha and Marco.”

A faint smile could be seen in Marco’s mouth. Joseph smiled brightly and continued saying.

“You too have cooked really good dishes. And it also suited my tastes. As I aged, I got to like more food that exhausted your jaw less. Sasha’s strawberry chiffon cake and Marco’s tiramisu. The point that both of them were soft was really good for me. The balance of the flavor was also perfect, and it didn’t feel excessive. Honestly speaking, these are difficult dishes to say what’s the better one. And the genres aren’t even the same.”

Jo Minjoon nodded involuntarily. Both of the dishes were 8 points. Of course there were small differences in it, but you could see the overall level of it to be similar. Joseph continued speaking.

“However Marco, the refreshing feeling your tiramisu gave me was less compared to Sasha’s dish. Her strawberry chiffon cake had lemon juice in the cream, and the sourness of the strawberry itself cleaned your tongue. But your tiramisu was just sweet. Of course, for a tiramisu, I couldn’t see many things to point out..... Sorry. My vote went to Kaya.”

“Thank you.”

Sasha replied with a plain voice. She wasn't so tactless as to express with a happy voice when right next to her, Marco was putting a dark expression.

Emily coughed. She slightly looked towards Jo Minjoon and Chloe.

“I tell you this beforehand, but this is simply my tastes. Rather than as a judge, as a customer. And recently, I got more interested in Asian food. A foreign flavor and aroma. Nowadays, I needed something with a different colour.”

Her mouth opened. Emily pointed her tongue with her finger and said.

“And this tongue told me. That both of the dishes said that it stimulated it in a long while. But of course, I did eat dak galbi and mapo tofu several times..... I can tell you this certainly. It was one of the most delicious dishes I have tried.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and replied. Chloe just had a confused face as if she also had to reply or not. Emily talked faster than her being able to finish her thought.

“Chloe. I was worried because you put peanut butter in your mapo tofu..... But that was your joker. A soft feeling was added on top of the spiciness. And Minjoon, I felt that your dak galbi was in

the middle of ginger fork and dak galbi. Could it be called a fusion?”

Jo Minjoon and Chloe didn't reply and just looked at Emily. Maybe she was burdened by their sights, but Emily laughed awkwardly and continued speaking.

“It's rather awkward to praise you like this and make one of you fall, I'm sorry. But even so, I wanted to tell that I ate really well. And.....The person I chose is Minjoon.”

In that instant, Chloe's face shook. She too, forced down her regret and applauded while smiling. Jo Minjoon too wanted to bow unconsciously, but then opened his mouth.

“Thank you for eating deliciously.”

“I don't just eat any food deliciously. Minjoon, you have grown up so much in this competition that we could clearly see it with our eyes. At first, it wasn't this delicious.....”

Jo Minjoon replied back with a smile. Emily looked at him as if she was looking at her grown up cousin and said.

“Just keep it like this. If you keep cooking like today, perhaps, you will really be able to win. But then, my plans to recruit you as an epicurean will crumble..... But I will keep cheering for you.”

“.....Can you say that in a broadcast so blatantly?”

“Is there something to hide? You will probably be the most promising epicurean in this country, no, in all of history.”

Making him stand out was also bothersome if it was this much. Jo Minjoon stepped back along an awkward smile. Alan said with a loud voice.

“The votes of we, judges, is merely one vote of the customer. There’s no need to feel so disappointed because you couldn’t get chosen by us. First, I will announce the dishes the customers emptied. Well, I think that you too have vaguely guessed it.

If you cooked once, you could vaguely serve 20 dishes. Hugo, that refilled 5 times, would have emptied at least a hundred dishes. And in the case of Jo Minjoon that refilled 4 times, it was around 80 and 100 dishes. And the only one that refilled twice was Marco. Alan opened his mouth.

“The one with the lowest score is Marco. You made fifty dishes, but only two of them emptied it. What do you think is the cause of your defeat?”

“.....Is just like you told me. It was too sweet. But of course, there would be some people that want that..... I couldn’t think that they normally prefer sour flavor. It was my mistake.”

“It’s a relief that you know it. However Marco, the tiramisu itself was fine. There’s no need to get that dispirited.”

The announcing continued. Hugo got 1st place with 113 empty dishes. Second place was Kaya with 93 dishes. And the next one was right.

“Minjoon, you are third place. You emptied 92 dishes.”

It was Jo Minjoon. He put a faint smile and hit Kaya with his elbow. Kaya sharpened her eyes as if she was asking why was he hitting her. He whispered in a low voice.

“It’s only one dish of difference.”

“You will never be able to shorten that difference in your life.”

“There’s no need to shorten it if it’s only one dish. It’s about the same.”

“When Usain Belt runs he always runs with a tiny difference, but he is still at the peak of the world.”

“I wonder. Aside from that difference, there’s no athlete named Usain Belt.”

“Hmph, then you don’t know about him. Stupid. To be so in the dark in world culture.”

He wanted to tell her that it wasn’t Belt, but Bolt, but Jo Minjoon stood it. The judges were looking at them with eyes telling them not to keep talking. He remembered his school days when he got reprimanded by the teachers. Kaya grumbled with a voice so low it couldn’t be heard, and dropped her head.

The announcement of the dish scores ended, but there was no one that reacted to that. Because it was just as they had imagined it. The important thing was the votes. Depending on how many points they got, it would decide everything. Alan said with a calm voice.

“We will immediately announce the results of the votes without

wasting any minute. I will say it in the order of the ones that had higher scores in the dishes. Hugo, 7 votes. Kaya, 17 votes.

At Kaya's score, an exclamation saying 'oh' was heard. If you added the votes of the judges and the customers, the total number of votes numbered to only 103. But if she got 17 votes, it was almost twice the average. Perhaps, Kaya could get first place in the votes. It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was also admiring her.

“Minjoon.....”

At this moment, contrary to what he had said of not wasting any more time, he shut his mouth. He continued speaking with a certainly trembling voice.

“.....24 votes.”

“Fucking crazy.”

It was unavoidable. Not even a quarter of the customers that looked for the restaurant were proper epicureans. Most of them thought that because it was famous and others also said that it was delicious, they also believed that it was truly delicious. Also in the case of famous restaurants, depending on how a famous epicurean evaluates it, the reactions of the customers also changed. Even if they presented the same dish, it was felt more deliciously, and at other times, more disgustingly.

That's why the thing called brand was important. It wasn't because a chef like Dave didn't open his own restaurant, or he worked in one of Rose Island's branches as a head chef because he

didn't have the capital to make his own restaurant.

Even if Jo Minjoon opened a restaurant with sloppy skills, he would be boasting about all the customers he had. Because his absolute sense of taste would give them confidence, just like a Michelin three star. Perhaps, it wasn't only between the epicureans, but the cooking business circle would value really sweetly the card named Jo Minjoon. Because if they put him in their menu development team, or even if they don't and sell a Jo Minjoon's menu, it would attract a lot of customers.

“Alan?”

Emily's voice woke up Alan from his imagination. Alan continued speaking with an awkward voice.

“I was in a loss for words because I was surprised. I will continue. Chloe, 10 votes. Anderson, 12 votes. Sasha, 9 votes. Ivanna, 6 votes. Olivia, 5 votes. Joanne, 6 votes. And..... Marco, 7 votes.”

7 votes. Taking into account that the people that took Marco's dish wasn't even 50, it was a really outstanding number. While the participants were calculating in their head, Joseph said with a calm voice.

“I will announce the first place for this mission. The first place got a total of 332 points with 92 points in the dishes, and 240 with the votes. ....Well, you have faces as if you had already expected it. You are right. It's Minjoon. Minjoon, you will get a special privilege in the next mission.”



“.....Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon replied with a bewildered face. He liked winning, but for it to be 24 votes? Was his dish that allowed him to get such an overwhelming victory? He could only think like that.

2nd place was Kaya. She didn't get as much as Jo Minjoon, but the amount of votes she got was also overwhelming compared to the others. He didn't name the next places. Because, it was meaningless. And the lowest score was announced.

“I will announce the lowest score. It's 121 points. This person got 5 votes, and emptied 71 dishes. You have done well. Olivia. Please, leave Grand Chef's house.”

Suddenly, Olivia started to cry. Jo Minjoon just looked at her. Although he couldn't get close with her until the end, she was a hispanic girl that had brought her dish and asked him the cooking score. Chloe hugged her with a face as sad as hers.

As Olivia left the kitchen, nervousness surged up again. 2 people were going to get eliminated in this mission. Who was going to be the next one, Jo Minjoon didn't calculate in purpose. He didn't want to.

“The second eliminated one got 52 empty dishes and got 7 votes. Compared to the empty dishes, the amount of votes was really fine. Marco.”

At that moment, an awful silence fell. Joseph didn't get dispirited at that silence. He continued to say with a calm voice.

“Your tiramisu was really good. You have done well. Keep cooking in the future. Your bread was so excellent to the point I would serve it in my restaurant.”

“.....Thank you.”

Marco didn't cry unlike Olivia. Although his voice was wet, maybe he didn't want to also tear up his eyes.

Looking at Marco's back leaving the kitchen, everybody just looked at him without any words. Before he left the kitchen, Marco turned back. Although they didn't know who Marco was looking at, he thought that all of the participants would be looking at him.

“Win! Without fail!”

No one could open their mouths and say that they were going to.

# Chapter 77: Spring, Spring, Spring (1)

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May. The weather was good, the flowers in the garden were slowly blooming. Jo Minjoon was seated on a bench with earphones in his ear and a book on his hands. It seemed like a piece of art, but the book in his hands wasn't a literature book but a cooking book.

Kaya looked at him and frowned as if she didn't like something. She approached him and opened her mouth. A rough voice was heard.

“What are you listening to?”

Kaya took off the earphone in Jo Minjoon's ear, brought it to hers, then frowned.

“Classic?”

“Precisely speaking it's Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in E Minor..... What's with that expression?”

“How much more boring do you have to be to be satisfied?”

“.....What about classical music? If you aren't going to listen to it, give it back.”

Jo Minjoon frowned and tried to pull the earphone. Kaya put her hand on her ear and prevented it from being taken back.

“Who says I'm not going to listen to it? It's better than listening to the wind blowing.”

Kaya talked like that and sat at the arm of the bench, and then looked at the page Jo Minjoon was looking at. She frowned.

“Why are there so many difficult words?”

“It’s your country’s words.”

“Those are extraterrestrial words masked with English.”

Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. Kaya talking like that wasn’t unreasonable. There were many words used that were derived from French or Spanish, and even Jo Minjoon had to search in the dictionary to find the words he didn’t know.

Because Kaya was leaning towards him to look at the book, her breath tickled his neck. Jo Minjoon slightly looked at Kaya and asked.

“Are you bored?”

“I have nothing to do, but I’m not bored.”

“What’s with having nothing to do, but not being bored?”

Kaya just looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon’s image was filled in her big, round eyes below her black and dark eyeline. He wasn’t planning to keep looking at her eyes as if it was a mirror, so he averted his sight. Why was it? That the moment he looked at her face, he felt embarrassed. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“What about doing some exercise like Chloe?”

“Even you don’t exercise much. Didn’t I tell you? Men need to have muscle to be considered men.”

“There’s no need for me to become your ideal man.”

“.....That’s true.”

Kaya scratched her lips as if she wanted to say something, and then scratched her head. Jo Minjoon looked at her with uncomfortable eyes. Her disheveled hair was caught in his eyes.

“Did you wash your hair?”

“I did, last night.”

“Even if you did, you have to wash your hair again when you wake up.”

“My scalp is dry, so there’s no need to wash it that much. What, why? Don’t look at me like that. This is not being dirty, but you being overly clean.”

“.....We will need a judge. Chloe!”

Jo Minjoon was frowning and waved his hands at Chloe that was passing by just in time. Chloe that was wearing a tight dark blue sports clothes approached them. She wiped the sweat out on her forehead and put a confused expression.

“Why were you calling me?”

“We need a person to tell us what’s black and white. Hair, because you washed it at night, can you not wash it the other day?”

“I wonder. I wash it many times because after I sweat after I exercise.”

“But you do wash it after you wake up, right?”

“I tend to..... Wash it. But why?”

At Chloe’s question, Jo Minjoon didn’t reply. Instead, he just looked at Kaya with a smile implying that he had won. Just looking at Kaya’s angry face she could guess the situation. She smiled bitterly.

“Now you are also fighting about washing your hair and not? I understand because she is Kaya but.....Minjoon, you too are a kid.”

“Wait, why do you understand me?”

“Because Kaya is Kaya?”

Chloe talked like that and smiled beautifully. It was a really beautiful smile. If you had eyes, a smile you couldn’t hate. She was so envious that she wanted to have the same smile, but Kaya thought that that kind of smile wasn’t going to suit her.

Kaya stood up with a bothered expression. Of course, the earphone tensed up and got off the ear. It wasn’t from Kaya’s ear, but from Jo Minjoon’s. Kaya put an excessively surprised expression and said.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t wash my hair this morning, but I pulled off your earphone?”

Jo Minjoon snorted and replied back.

“Just prepare lunch.”

—

[Me : How are you doing?]

[Marco : Just so, slowly looking for a place to work.]

[Me : I think that there are going to be a lot of pâtissiers that would want you.]

[Marco : The reactions of all of the places I went to were quite good, but I will know the results when it comes out.]

At the reply that came back, Jo Minjoon smiled. The skills that were showed in the broadcast were clearly superior. But even without thinking of his skills, only by recruiting him, the popularity of the restaurant would increase. The prestige Grand Chef had in the United States was that much.

[Me : Call me if you get a job. I will visit you. But of course, I will need to be in the US by then.]

[Marco : Okay, thank you. :>]

Jo Minjoon put back his handphone. His piece of work was being completed in the oven.

What he was making right now was tarte tatin, a french apple tart. The recipe was simple. Just like all of the baking, it started with the dough. After piling the flour in the shape of mountain using the sieve, he made a hole in the middle of that and poured cold water and salt. The process of slowly pouring water and

making the dough was the most important one. Actually, the flavor of the bread was half-done in this process.

After making the dough and putting it in a shape of a cross, you flatten it, put butter in the middle of it, and fold it like a takchi (떡쥘). You flatten it again when it had the shape of a square, fold it as it originally was, make it flat again, and fold it again. He had to repeat that process five times. There was also a technique similar to this when making udon.

After that, the rest was easy. You smear butter in the hot pan, and pour sugar. You put sliced apple in the shape of a wedge and its seed removed and put it on top of that. If you heat it for 20-30 minutes, the apple juice, butter, and sugar caramelizes and browns.

After covering it with a crust dough he prepared beforehand, he pierced some holes for the dough to not become soggy because of the moisture of the apple. After that, putting it in the preheated oven in between 180 and 200 degrees was the end. Actually, there was one more step left, to carefully flip the tarte tatin. Then the bread below and on top of that will show the tasty seared apples along with the aroma of butter and caramel.

And the tarte tatin Jo Minjoon made, was quite fine.

[Tarte tatin]

Freshness : 96%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High



Cooking Score : 6/10

It didn't have any special methods, but it was made faithfully to the standards. Thinking that his baking level was 5, it wasn't a bad result. Actually, it was easier to get a 6 in dishes related to baking. Perhaps, it would be because it was influenced by his cooking score. Because it's different for people who knows to cook, bake, and a person with experience to learn baking.

“Did it turn out well?”

Anderson approached him and asked. On his hands was a dish that contained mille-feuille. The white cream that was in the sides of the bread seemed even more tasty than the tarte tatin. And the cooking score was even 7. Jo Minjoon gulped. Anderson stepped back as if he was cautious of him.

“You can't eat it yet. We agreed to eat it together when the broadcast started.”

“.....You could have failed it. I will taste it for you.”

“I'm sorry, but I already did.”

Anderson talked like that and raised one corner of his mouth. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. Then, Kaya bumped Jo Minjoon slightly and passed by. There was also a plate that contained a cheesecake in her hands, but the thing that caught his eyes was her lapping hair. Just how much shampoo and conditioner did she use? An apple and lime aroma pierced his nose, and her hair seemed just like that of a model's from a CF. Kaya walked a few steps and slightly looked back.

Anderson smirked and asked.

“Why is she like that?”

“She’s Kaya.”

Anderson nodded as if he had understood. She’s Kaya. Why did that short words be so convincing?

In the kitchen, there weren’t only those three. There was also Chloe, Sasha, Joanne, Ivanna and Hugo. All of the 8 participants were gathered. They weren’t going to cook dinner because they had already eaten. What they were preparing right now was the snack to eat while they watched the broadcast. Jo Minjoon said in a regretful voice.

“It would have been good if Marco still remained. I didn’t eat something as delicious as his souffle.”

“You say that because you still didn’t try mine.”

“.....Why are you that repulsive?”

“The world tends to send jealousy rather than angels to good people.”

“I think that it’s only for people that are good halfway.”

“If I’m halfway good at my age, then in 10 years I will be outstanding.”

Jo Minjoon shook his head as if he was sick of it. It’s normal to see the sides you didn’t know of a person the closer you got, so you

saw that person in a different way. But at least, Anderson was steady in one thing.

“Shameless bastard.”

“You aren’t that much better.

Anderson said in a calm voice. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson while shaking.

“I’m shameless?”

“After you say it that calmly you get perplexed when you listen to that. Look, are you shameless or not?”

“.....I’m not a little?”

“I thought that you spoke English well, but a foreigner is still a foreigner. In these cases, you don’t say a little, but a lot.”

Jo Minjoon snorted and walked up the stairs. As he went to the lobby of the 4th floor, he saw Kaya seated in the sofa closest to the TV. Precisely speaking, she was lying between the arm of the sofa, and the back.

“You are going to become a cow like that.”

“What are you talking about?”

“It’s something from our country. If you eat something and lie down like that, you will become a cow.”

“Not a pig?”

“Maybe because you can’t digest well. I don’t know.” (TL:cow in korean is 소, and digest is 소화.)

“Hmph. Even if you went to college, there’s no much meaning. You didn’t even learn something like that.”

At Kaya’s words Jo Minjoon smiled faintly and sat in his place. Kaya extended her hand while still lying down.

“Give me yours. I want to try it.”

“Eat it when it starts.”

“Oh, please. Don’t act so poor. There’s not even 10 minutes until it starts.”

Jo Minjoon just licked his lips and served his tarte tatin in a plate. Kata ate a bite and nodded while putting an expression as if it wasn’t bad.

“It’s fine.”

“It isn’t too sweet?”

“You eat these things sweet. Well, it could be a bit sweet for you. But even so, customers would want these kind of things.”

At Kaya’s words, Anderson nodded.

“The more stimulating it is, it will be less healthy for the customers. But what the customers want isn’t health. If they had wanted health, they would have gone to a hospital instead of a restaurant. But of course, there are places that only serve healthy food.....but honestly speaking, it doesn’t sell well. Health and stimulus aren’t opposites, but even so, there’s quite a distance between them.”

When Anderson was finishing his words, footsteps was heard from the stairs. The other five people were all coming into the lobby with the pudding, cake or bread they made. Chloe looked at the TV and asked.

“It didn’t start yet?”

“The previous notice passed by. It will start after a few advertisements.”

“Good. Just in time.”

Chloe laughed happily and sat in her place. While they were all eating the dishes, the advertisement passed by. The logo of Grand Chef filled the screen and the broadcast started. Just like the food truck mission lasted for a week, last week’s broadcast and also this one was about that.

And the contents of it was just like they had known. Honestly speaking, it was more fun watching how the others fared instead of watching their own stories. For example, it was when Jo Minjoon and Peter were having a serious talk. Actually, Jo Minjoon was really embarrassed, but the others were really interested. Joanne asked as if she was surprised.

“You two talked about things like that? Why didn’t I know of that? I was right next to you.”

“Because we talked in a low voice.”

But even so, not all of the scenes were funny. Because the story of

the jerk that picked up a fight with Kaya, and ended up fighting with Chloe wasn't pleasant.

“Stupid bastard. Does he want to live like that?”

Jo Minjoon said with a voice full of disdain. It was a really strange thing for him to curse, but nobody pointed that out. Because they were feeling the same. It was the same when a jerk appeared in Jo Minjoon's team. Kaya said with a cynical voice.

“Poor bitch. Look how she eats everything and asks for a refund. If you did those things in our town, you would really disappear while you walk at night.”

“.....I don't think I will be able to live in that town.”

“I didn't ask you to.”

Kaya said with a sharp voice. Chloe stroke Kaya's hair. She, who liked disheveled hair, seemed to be quite disappointed at the smooth hair. Kaya opened her eyes like a cat and asked.

“Are you going to keep treating me like a kid?”

“But you are younger than me.”

Chloe laughed and replied. Kaya grumbled something but didn't take her hand off. It was just like looking at a dog and a cat. It was at that moment, Rachel Rose was caught in the screen. And Martin didn't miss any scenes of her. He could only do so. Because she was once the top person. She was a person that guaranteed the ratings.

“Rachel Rose..... You really did meet her.”

Sasha mumbled absentmindedly. Even when she had heard that they had met her, she didn't think that it was a lie, but now that she saw the screen, it was a different feeling. It was a scene that Jo Minjoon was certainly being paid attention. From the audience, and from the chefs.

But actually, they didn't even get jealous because it was way beyond the standards. For him to have an absolute sense of taste, it really was a cheat-like ability. It could be a brand only with its existence, so it had great value. But they were curious if that pretty boy would know that.

After that, it was pretty simple. The results of the mission were announced as usual, and then they named the people who would be doing the eliminating mission. Looking again at the scene where Jacob gets eliminated again wasn't very pleasureable, but everyone just kept watching with their mouths shut. Because it could happen to themselves anytime.

And after that, it was the scene which Jo Minjoon's team ate in Rose Island. Honestly at that moment, Jo Minjoon wanted to get out of that place. Because he knew the scene that was going to come out quite well. They thought that only luxurious dishes were caught by the camera, but after a few minutes, the scene which Jo Minjoon cried was shown. Although for the viewers, it would be a scene that would make them feel his genius-like sense of taste..... But at least, it wasn't like that for him. But fortunately, those that were together with him didn't make fun of him, but seemed to be more interested in the food.....

“You are a crybaby. Crybaby.”

Kaya smiled in a detestable way and said. Jo Minjoon blushed and opened his mouth.

“No, it was unavoidable. If you eat it too, you will be able to understand.”

“.....Would the day that I try it ever come? A three star.”

“Why not? It will.”

“I hope it does.”

“You are only going to eat it? You have to become the head chef of a three restaurant. Is it going to be hard?”

Anderson replied.

“It is, crazy bastard.”



## Chapter 78: Spring, Spring, Spring (2)

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Jason Bean : Rose Island..... I also want to go there. How much would it cost?

└ Sophia Chen : It's different according to the branch, but for the one in Chicago, \$300 per person would be enough. If you just want to go to a three star and not to Rose Island, there would be many places at half the price.

└ Jason Bean : @Sophia Chen Compared to the value of its name, it's not that expensive. I thought that it would cost at least a thousand dollars.

└ Sophia Chen : @Jason Bean A restaurant that charges you a thousand dollars..... If you don't order really expensive food, I think that it would be difficult finding that kind of place.

Tomos Surrey : There's also quite some romance in the food truck. And Peter talking with Jo Minjoon was also cool. The feeling of fellow soldiers sharing their friendship before going to war? Well, even if that was the case, it wouldn't disappear the fact that Peter badmouthed about Kaya's past.

└ Dante Miles : Honestly, I do understand you, but I can't sympathize with you. Whatever situation he was in, he made me feel bad.

Sienna A. : Personally, I think that Anderson showed that he was really experienced in this food truck mission, and it was good to see that. And it also moved me that Chloe stepped up to cover for Kaya.

└ Luke Joe : That part was good, indeed. The annoyance I got while looking at the jerks all disappeared when I saw how Chloe reacted. It seems like she is really good natured. I want to be her

friend.

Kaya Lotus : I'm Kaya.

└ Glori Castillo : Then, I'm Jo Minjoon.

└ Kaya Lotus : @Glori Castillo So you are seated next to me right now?

└ Gina Carr : @Glori Castillo Don't react to these kind of guys one by one. Guys that act like this because they can't get enough attention aren't one or two.

└ Kaya Lotus : @Gina Carr I'm still Kaya.

Roy Sherfan : I will marry Kaya.

└ Wretic : I think that Jo already took her.

└ Roy Sherfan : @Wretic I will take her back.

Pat Fiasco : Anyways, I never thought that I would see Rachel again on the screen. I thought that she would only remain as a memory from when I was a child, but looking at her again like this is nice. I also think that the rating would rise really high.

└ K.R.R : I think that it surpassed 1/3 . I got more surprised by the fact that she was interested in Jo Minjoon rather than her appearance. I heard that all of the chefs Rachel taught received at least one Michelin star. Minjoon's future is bright.

└ Pat Fiasco : @K.R.R It would be good if Minjoon and Kaya open a restaurant together. And then, they marry.

Tess Gilly : I have something to say. When I was in middle school.....

“Almost everything is about Minjoon and Kaya.”

Chloe read all of the comments and put her handphone back in her pocket. Even if she didn't try to be too bothered by it, it was unavoidable to feel a bit of regret. 'I'm also doing my best.' She mumbled like that inwardly, so there was no way someone else could have heard it.

It wasn't that she wasn't popular. Chloe too was a participant that had personality and abilities. However, the popularity of Kaya and Jo Minjoon was overwhelming. And after that, Anderson had more popularity than Chloe. But of course, there was no meaning in ranking them, but the results were somewhat frustrating.

It wasn't even autumn, but spring, so why did they feel this low? Chloe pressed her cheeks with both of her hands, and pouted out her lips like a fish. Joanne and Ivanna that were looking at her next to her, exchanged glances for a moment and then, moved their steps. Joanne asked.

“Why are you in such low spirits?”

“It's nothing. I'm just tired.”

Chloe laughed. It was a weak laugh. Ivanna took out a chocolate wrapped in vinyl from her chest, and lent it to Chloe.

“Eat. It will give you strength.”

“.....Thanks.”

After she peeled off the vinyl and ate a bite of the chocolate bar, the cookie that was hidden inside of the chocolate crumbled softly. And there was also cream in it. Chloe said while admiring.

“Did you make this?”

“Not me, but Sasha made it for me.”

“I will also have to ask her to make some for me.”

To combine chocolate and cream this softly. Chloe put on a nice smile.

“I think that the things Sasha are making nowadays are becoming more delicious.”

“You too? I also thought that.”

Joanne said as if it was surprising. After Chloe ate all of the chocolate with a face like she was having fun, she also licked the chocolate on her fingers. It was at that moment that they could see Kaya and Jo Minjoon coming up the stairs and entering the kitchen. While Chloe just looked at them without saying anything, Joanne opened her mouth.

“It seems like Kaya is going to make breakfast again. Aren’t they going to date if they keep it? Now, I am also getting confu..... Ouch, what was that?”

Joanne stopped talking and looked at Ivanna resentfully. Ivanna brought the hand she pinched Joanne’s waist with to her mouth,

and gave her a warning after saying ‘shh’. And then, slightly looked at Chloe. Joanne looked at Ivanna’s finger, Chloe’s back, and her looking at the kitchen and then put a strange face.

“.....Really?”

“Right. Chloe likes Minjoon.”

“What?!”

Chloe was putting on an absentminded face, and got surprised, and looked back at her. Joanne facepalmed. She even pinched her waist to act tactfully, but she ended up saying it in such a calm voice. Chloe waved her hands while blushing.

“Now you are also planning on getting me mixed up in that? No, it’s really not.”

“Okay then.”

Ivanna replied with her usual sleepy voice as if it didn’t matter what side it was on. Chloe stood up from her place in an exaggerated manner.

“Let’s go ask Sasha to make some more of this. It’s delicious. You aren’t going? We also have to slowly eat breakfast.”

“... ..”

The reply didn’t come back. She could only see Joanne’s eyes that were filled with suspicion.

Chloe put on a teary face.

—

Chicago's Rose Island was getting bombarded with more reservation calls than usual, after the scene Jo Minjoon visited it. But of course, as it was a three star restaurant, there was no way you would be able to get a table without having reserved beforehand, but that wasn't the case right now. There were so many calls that even if you called a thousand times, only one would get through.

For Dave, it was a situation he didn't know if he had to be happy or not. It was good that there were many customers, but the result of that was that the regulars couldn't even make a call and had difficulty in reserving a table.....

On top of that, there would be many people that would reserve at the moments excitement, and cancel when the day came. No, perhaps that would be better. If they didn't even cancel the reservation and didn't show up, they would only waste ingredient fees. And the restaurants that went bankrupt because of the canceled reservations weren't one or two, so it wasn't weird for Dave to have a face full of worry.

However, it didn't take long for his face to change brightly. After he listened to the whisper of the youngest chef, Dave got out of the kitchen immediately and went towards the room. And then, he smiled brightly after he looked at the people that were seated in the room.

“Oh, god. Joseph, Alan, and Emily on top of that! For you to come.”

The three of them stood up and shook hands in order. He didn't shake hands with Alan, but instead hugged him. There was a time when Alan and Dave were together in the same kitchen. Alan said in a calm voice.

“It's the first time after it became a three star, right?”

“It seems so. Have you been well?”

“Well, I'm the same as always. But I do think that if I get one more star, I would be better.”

Dave smiled and took the orders. But there wasn't even a need to call it as order. Animal or plant, it ended after you chose one of the two. All of the them chose the animal one.

Dave returned to the kitchen and the three judges just kept silent for a moment. Some meaningless words came between them and then Joseph, went straight to the main point.

“The level of the participants this time is rather high.”

It was a happy yet stifling voice. Actually, even his face was like that. He was putting a face of a student that didn't know how to solve a problem. It was the same for Alan and Emily. Emily let out a sigh and said.

“Minjoon said this in the interview. That in the last buffet

mission, there were six 8 points dishes. Although it's funny to trust in his standards 100 percent, but honestly, I understand those numbers. The six dishes Jo Minjoon said didn't fall back compared to the specialized chefs, certainly. If they decorated it a little better, even if they presented it in a restaurant, it would get good comments."

"That's why it's all the more difficult as to what kind of mission do we have to make....."

Originally, they would only have to use the missions they had planned to do. But now, they couldn't do so. Because it was difficult to make the participants of this season to feel a sense of danger.

Actually, after the last mission ended, Martin let out a crying sound. He had to see one or two people that made mistakes or fell back compared to the others, but those cases were scarce. Because eliminating a participant that did well than another that did better was different to eliminating a participant that showed a decisive mistake.

Of course, if only the cream of the crop survive then the level will certainly rise, but if they wanted to make the viewers feel nervous, a scene which the participants were having it hard needed to appear. They needed to at least maintain that nervousness once. That was the theme for the next broadcast. Emily opened her mouth.

"What about making Asian food? I don't think that all of them would be accustomed to it. We would get a fine scene where they are acting in a scurry way."



“It’s not a bad idea. However, the audience would think that we would be giving Chloe, no, Minjoon an extremely advantageous mission. Looking at how much effect Minjoon’s popularity had..... Even if it could happen once, if it happened twice, they would think that the director was doing it on pur.....”

Alan stopped talking. He gulped and looked at the servers bringing the food. The amuse bouche’s were placed on top of the torched wood plank. He put the gourgere in his mouth and felt the flavor of the cheese spreading in his mouth. That savory and sweet flavor eased his nervousness. Alan opened his mouth with a voice that was certainly more relaxed than before.

“Anyways, let’s reserve the idea of Asian cooking. We need a more certain item.”

They didn’t keep talking until they had finished eating the main dish. Honestly, they were concentrating on the dish in front of their eyes, so they couldn’t talk much. Dessert. Eating the sudachi curd with green apple jelly, Emily admired.

“Minjoon certainly reproduced the recipe exactly. There’s no difference in the flavor. It really feels like it was cooked by the same chef, in the same restaurant. That time, I was relying on my memories so I thought that it was identical because it was similar.....”

“.....I certainly can’t feel a tiny difference. It’s to the point that expecting his absolute taste to be common sense to be difficult.”

Alan said with a sickened voice. Emily that was looking at him

with a smile you couldn't know the meaning of, opened her mouth and said with a gentle voice. Between her red lips, her red tongue showed.

“If he comes this way, he will really become an epicurean that won't be repeated twice in history. How will he fare in the road of cooking? Of course, his ability to reproduce a recipe is certain, but because of that, he didn't show cooking skills that are his own, right?”

“Only because he didn't show it much, there's no need to be afraid and give up before hand. Minjoon's sense of taste will be favorable to have while cooking, it won't prejudicate him. And I am also looking at him highly as a chef. He has talent. Surviving until now wasn't solely by luck.”

Alan's and Emily's eyes became sharper. When the air between them was becoming sharper, Joseph said in a soft voice.

“However Minjoon wishes to become a chef. I think that the conversation ended with that.”

“.....You don't know. Perhaps, he will change his mind later on.”

Emily said with a depressed face. Joseph opened his mouth.

“Emily. Just like you can't get out of the tasting world, Minjoon can't get out of the cooking world. There is already a seat destined for all of the people. And if you can't be in your seat, you suffer so much to the point you can't stand it. And Minjoon's seat, rather than this.....”

Joseph raised a finger. It was a hand that was burnt by oil and fire, and had scars full of knife cuts. And the bad looking finger that by no means you could call pretty, pointed towards the kitchen.

“It’s that place. Even if you want him that much, you can’t change his seat. That’s something no one can do, and shouldn’t do.”

Emily didn’t reply anything back. She also knew quite well that wanting Jo Minjoon was just a greed of hers. A stifled sigh flowed out from between her lips. It was at that moment that Alan opened his mouth.

“.....The mission, I thought of one.”

Josephs and Emily’s sights directed to Alan. Alan’s corner of the mouth raised.

“What’s the reason we are clashing our opinions like this? It’s because a new type of guy we never saw before appeared. And the reason we gathered here is the same. Participants that are clearly more superior compared to the previous seasons. Ingredients that are hard to handle are making us feel pain. Then, we just have to return that back.”

Alan laughed as if he was enjoying it so much he couldn’t hold it back. Emily asked as if she was going to die from curiousness.

“What is it? What did you think of?”

“It’s ingredients.”

Alan continued speaking.

“Let’s give them ingredients they have never handled before.”

# Chapter 79: The Unfamiliar One (1)

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“Chloe is somewhat strange nowadays.”

Morning. While extending her head and looking at the sides carefully, Kaya said in a voice so low it seemed she was telling an immense secret. Jo Minjoon pushed Kaya's forehead with his finger.

“Your hair will fall in the soup.”

“.....You will keep doing this?”

“So, what's strange about Chloe?”

Kaya frowned and looked at Jo Minjoon with sharp eyes, but in the end opened her mouth. But of course, that voice was rougher than usual.

“Chloe, she seems like she's worried about something. And she's absent minded most of the time.”

“Maybe it's spring fever.”

“If it was something like that, would I have told you about it?”

Jo Minjoon just smiled brightly instead of replying. Kaya frowned.

“Why are you laughing?”

“It's nothing.”

It was praiseworthy that she, who raised up a wall like that, was worrying about others first. But it was obvious that if he said that, Kaya wouldn't admit it. Jo Minjoon turned his head with a calm face. Chloe was taking out the dumplings from the steamer in the pot for some time now. At the cooking score that could clearly be seen from far away, Jo Minjoon admired. 7 points. For a dish that was made in less than an hour, it was quite fine.

It was at that moment. Chloe exclaimed with an 'ah' and raised her hands in a surprised way. The pot fell to the ground and made a noisy sound. Even before Jo Minjoon could get up, Kaya stood up and walked towards Chloe. Looking at the back of her hands that became red, Kaya put on a painful expression even if she wasn't the one that got injured.

"Ah, why are you getting burnt and such!"?

"Ahaha.....I'm fine."

"I knew this was going to happen when you were absent minded. Keep washing with cold water. I will bring some medicine."

"No, i'm really fine. Not to that point....."

"What are you going to do if a scar remains in the hands of a girl? You are different than me."

Kaya talked like that and went to find the first aid kit with a serious face. Jo Minjoon, that was just looking at the situation, repeated Kaya's last words with a sad face. 'I'm different than you.'

Thinking about her past, those words were understandable. Kaya couldn't live a normal life. As a girl, as a student, and as the

daughter of a family. When girls her age were applying lipstick on her lips, she stained her face with dust; and when other's sprayed perfume, she had to work in the market all day until the fishy smell stained her.

However, the problem was in what she had said before that: 'What are you going to do if a scar remains in the hands of a girl. I'm different than you.' He was stifled by her attitude that it was obvious that she could get some injuries. She was a girl herself. He felt bad that she took for granted that it was obvious that she didn't have any importance or that her life didn't have any value.

Jo Minjoon approached Chloe. Chloe smiled awkwardly while washing her hand with cold water.

"Ugh, so embarrassing. To make a mistake in these kind of things, I'm a failure as a chef."

"Why do you take that until that point? Pro's too, tend to get injured in minor things. Your injury, do you think it's grave?"

"No. Perhaps, I won't even have to apply medicine."

"Even so, apply some. You can get a scar if you are careless."

".....Are you worried about me"

"Then, shouldn't I for a friend."

At his words, Chloe didn't reply anything and smiled faintly. Why could it be? That the moment she smiled, her face was still dark. He kept remembering what Kaya had told him. That she was worried about something. And he also remembered the advice, but not the advice she asked him.

At that time, the only thing Jo Minjoon could do to Chloe, who was wondering about her path, was a sloppy consolation. He wondered if something would change if he talked about the same things as that day, but even so, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth. He could only do so.

“The thing at that time, are you still worried about that?”

At that moment, Chloe could only get perplexed as to what Jo Minjoon was asking her. She couldn't understand as to when he was referring to when he said 'at that time'. And she realized only after a long while. The day she made something like a discussion about cooking. And thinking about it, Jo Minjoon was also affectionate that day.

Chloe put strength on the corner of her mouth. However, thinking about that day, she unconsciously smiled. The smile she was holding down until now, forced the corner of her mouth to raise. Chloe coughed and removed her smile. She was somewhat embarrassed at herself laughing right now.

“It's nothing like that. I'm just absent minded nowadays.”

“.....I will first clean it up. Keep washing your hand.”

Jo Minjoon picked up the pot that fell to the ground. Chloe glanced at the insides of the pot. Fortunately, the dumplings that were on the steamer didn't crumble much.



“I will be able to eat it.”

“.....You are worried about that in this situation?”

“I’m a chef first.”

Chloe talked like that and smiled bitterly. A lovely, but a worried smile appeared in her face. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh.

“Is it something difficult to tell me?”

Chloe didn’t reply. But that rather became the answer. Jo Minjoon didn’t ask more and shut his mouth. Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon with complicated eyes and slowly opened her mouth.

“How are you doing with Kaya?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s the same meaning as what the others ask.”

She hides the crude truth behind the joking tone of voice. Chloe tried to say it in a non-important voice, the most she could. And there was even a smile in her face. So fortunately, it seemed that Jo Minjoon didn’t notice the special secret.

“.....You know that it isn’t it. Why are you acting like this now?”

“I even thought that you were nothing, but nowadays even I don’t know well. Ey, don’t look at me with those eyes. Honestly, do you know that you got a lot closer? I can only get confused.”

At Chloe's words, Jo Minjoon couldn't find any words to refute her back. Actually, Chloe's words wasn't pushing it. Because there were scenes that even he admitted that they looked excessively close in the broadcast, and in the edited videos. Chloe just looked at Jo Minjoon and said.

“Are you affirming it? That you..... Don't think about Kaya like that.”

“It is true that I admire her.”

Jo Minjoon replied with a plain voice. However, the nuance for the word admire was rather vague. Chloe's smile became dull.

“If you only admire her, then how does she think about you?”

How Kaya thinks of him? There was no time he could properly think about that question. Kaya was approaching them. She opened the first aid kit and frowned like Popeye.

“Look, it became this red. What are you fine about?”

“Kaya, wait. It's better to apply some medicine after the heat disperses a little.”

Kaya, that was taking out the medicine, lowered her arm at Jo Minjoon's voice. Kaya looked at Chloe's hand and said as if she was just throwing it.

“Ah, I met Martin in the way.”

“Martin?”

“Yes. He said that the mission will start soon.”

“What, so suddenly? When is soon?”

Kaya replied.

“Lunch.”

—

“You guys are excellent.”

Lunch. Those were the words Joseph said while having the 8 participants that were hungry in front of him. When the participants just smiled awkwardly at that sudden compliment, Joseph continued speaking.

“Perhaps, you can think of it as a formal congratulations. However, it isn’t it. You are certainly excellent compared to the previous seasons.”

“Joseph is right. Because you present only good dishes, we couldn’t not work hard. I’m talking about the mission that will fill this kitchen with proper grief.”

At Alan’s meaningful words, some trembled. Even listening to him made them feel nervous. They were the best 8. They were confident on whatever theme or ingredient appeared. But the important point was that the judges also knew that.

A mission that would be hard to chase even if it were them. What could that mission be? Jo Minjoon thought for a moment, but he couldn't think of anything. In his head, there was no memory related to this at all.

While they were looking at Alan's lips with nervous eyes, Alan smiled and looked at Emily. Emily smiled brightly. They thought that it was a really fresh smile, but looking at it in this situation, for some reason they felt it to be hateful.

“Perhaps, there are some ingredients you didn't eat. And the staff had also suffered quite a bit acquiring the rarest ingredients. And they got a total of three ingredients. Yes, these will be the ingredients you will handle.”

Emily talked like that and pointed to the table that was in front of the judges. There were 8 boxes placed on it.

‘There are different ingredients in each of those boxes.....’

Jo Minjoon's gaze grew sharper. But of course, just because it grew sharper, he couldn't see through the contents of the box. You wouldn't know if an alarm window appeared, but it was impossible with his eyes. There was no meaning if it was hidden like that. It was at that moment. Alan opened his mouth suddenly.

“I will reveal the first ingredient.”

The moment Alan opened the box, everyone's faces became contorted. And some even wanted to throw up. Because the ingredient in the box was too shocking. It was the same for Jo Minjoon. He just looked to the front with a stupid face. He had never guessed that they would bring an ingredient like that. Alan raised the corner of his mouth in a satisfactory way looking at their reactions.

“It's calf brain! It's an ingredient that lets you directly feel the taste of French people. And I think that most of you wouldn't even have eaten it.”

Calf brain. It did appear in some French restaurants, but if you weren't a considerable epicurean, it was a dish that you couldn't even bring to your mouth because of the repulsiveness. There would be some people that think that it's the same meat, but normally, you got a disgusting feeling when they told you that it was brain.

But fortunately, the next ingredients were less shocking compared to calf brain. Truffle, it was also called as songreo mushroom (송로버섯) and it was one of the three delicacies in the world. But of course, excluding Japan and Korea, there would be no countries that reckon something like three delicacies in the world, but even so it wasn't an ingredient that didn't have value. And just looking at that value made you feel the worth of the truffle. And it was certainly an ingredient they wouldn't have handled. Because even Jo Minjoon had used something like truffle oil for things related to truffle.

There were no easy ingredients. Because continued by truffle,

appeared things like shark fin, deer liver, sea anemone, etc. But fortunately, the next two ingredients weren't so bad for Jo Minjoon. Octopus and cow tripe. Octopus wasn't an ingredient that was looked for that much in the west, but that wasn't the case in Korea. And it was the same for cow tripe. How many restaurants were in Korea that only made grilled intestines?

But the last ingredient made them wake up when they were getting relaxed. At first, Jo Minjoon thought that it was sausage. But it wasn't it. Because if it was sausage, there was no way that it would give that horrible feeling. Emily said with an embarrassed expression.

“The last ingredient is cow phallus. It's not an ingredient that's looked for much, but the strong aroma is quite charming..... ah, for some reason I feel that you are looking at me as a savage.”

“You will each be in charge of one these 8 ingredients. I'm talking about choosing the ingredients with the boxes hiding it. Only, the winner of the last mission will be able to choose the ingredient. Minjoon. Is there an ingredient you want?”

“.....At least, I don't think that I will choose three ingredients.”

Sea anemone, calf brain, and cow phallus were things that you didn't know how to cook it as much as the looks shocked you. There were two things Jo Minjoon was attracted to. Octopus and cow tripe. It could be said that he was quite familiar to it.

He didn't take long to think. Jo Minjoon said with a determined voice.

“I have decided.”

## Chapter 80: The Unfamiliar One (2)

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The first ingredient Jo Minjoon thought of using was octopus. For Westerners, and especially for sailors, it was an ingredient that was famous for being called as the devil fish. It wasn't that there were no octopus dishes in the region of the Mediterranean Sea, like Spain, France, and Italy, but even so, it was an ingredient Westerners avoided. In Korea, it was similarly treated as jellyfish. And perhaps, it was even worse than that.

The proper recipes he knew about octopus was teriyaki or octopus sushi. But it was the kind of dish that was difficult to get a cooking score of 7, because the cooking process was too simple.

To pick cow tripes... it was a dish he ate more than cook, and the only cooking process he could think of was grilling or frying. It wasn't easy to get a high score with that simple cooking method. To accompany it with purée or sauce, he wasn't confident on thinking up something that could suit well with cow tripe.

In the end, what Jo Minjoon picked was the truffle, precisely speaking the box that contained the white truffle. At least, he knew much more cooking methods compared to octopus and cow tripe. Alan just looked at the box and said.

“Truffle.....Although it looks to be the easiest from here, it's the most difficult ingredient to bring the right aroma. What are you planning to cook with that?”

“I haven't decided yet. I'm halfway there. I will decide when I get to know the cooking time.”



“Then, I will immediately announce the time for cooking. One hour. It’s not for only you, Minjoon, but everyone here has to complete their dishes in that time.”

One hour. Many recipes he had thought of disappeared. Alan just stared at Jo Minjoon. And only then did Jo Minjoon notice him and returned to his place with an ‘ah’. Emily covered the lid for the remaining 7 boxes and said.

“Everybody turn around. I will change the position of the boxes. Nobody look this way before I tell you to do so.

The eight participants all turned back. The sound of lifting and placing the boxes was heard. Kaya tried to concentrate on that sound. From the right, from the left. However, even if she did concentrate, there was no way she would know where the boxes went. Because they could have lifted it and just placed it in the same place. Kaya frowned.

‘It would be good if only I don’t get that.’

She was confident in being able to handle most of the ingredients. She even had experience cooking octopus in the market. Because when the market people gave her ingredients that were about to rot, she couldn’t throw it away, even if it was a monster like octopus.

She had never handled truffle, but she was confident on being able to get the hang of it if she got familiar with the flavor and aroma. However, sea anemone was an exception. It was also the

first time Kaya saw one. Even if she wanted to test by grilling or boiling it to see how the flavor changes, she didn't have a big amount.

The people took the boxes one by one. And it was the same for Kaya. She felt that it was unexpectedly heavy, but she couldn't know if the box itself was heavy or not.

As everyone returned to their places, the judges smiled. Even at first glance, it could clearly be seen that they had expectant faces to see the reactions of the participants. Joseph yelled in a surprise.

“Everybody open your boxes!”

There was no need to, but they tensed up at his voice. Kaya opened the lid of the box in the nervousness that if she didn't open it immediately, it will blow up like a bomb, and she moved her hands so fast it seemed like she was convulsing. And then, she immediately contorted her face.

“.....Oh fuck it.”

The round sausage, no, the cow phallus that looked like a round sausage was placed inside the box. Kaya raised that thing looking at it as if she was looking at a cockroach. The exterior was oily, and as she smelled it, she sensed the strong and unique smell of gut.

On the other side, Chloe got a flavorless and aromaless shark fin unlike the cow phallus. Actually, you could say that it wasn't a

good ingredient because only the feeling was important, and you could only give it flavor with the sauce..... But just because of that, you needed to have high skills to cook it deliciously.

However Chloe was putting a strange face. She did eat shark fin before, but it wasn't an ingredient she liked much. She didn't eat large sized fishes because of the big amount of quantity it contained and to eat healthier. And if she was going to give it flavor through a sauce, then was there a need to eat it at all? That was what she thought. And she didn't have as much experience in handling shark fin as that.

The sea anemone Kaya was begging not to come to her went to Anderson. However, he didn't really have a nervous face. It was Anderson who had received tutelage under his parents about all kind of cuisine. And he wasn't as inexperienced as to yield before something like a sea anemone.

Hugo got the calf brain. Joanne, deer liver. Ivanna, cow tripe. And Sasha got the octopus. They all had dissatisfied faces.

“Just looking at your faces, I can see your confidence and ambition.”

Alan with an ill voice. Sighs could be heard from everywhere. Joseph smiled like a grandfather from the next house and said.

“Perhaps you would think that this mission is too excessive. As these are ingredients some of you may be disgusted at, you will also think if there's a need to cook it. But this will show your skills

more clearly than ever. With an ingredient you haven't handled and aren't familiar with, the ability to understand and analyze that ingredient in that short time, those who don't have that ability will be the ones to get eliminated today."

"There isn't a fixed amount of eliminated participants. I promise you. That if you make something over the standards, there will be no eliminations. But of course, if you get caught below that, it's going to be a different story."

There won't be eliminated participants. At those words, no participants got flustered. In the first place, it didn't seem like the judges did think that it was going to happen. Because one of the 8 could only end up making a mistake or showing lacking abilities. If there wasn't a miracle.....

"We will give you 10 minutes to design your recipe. Think up how you are going to cook in those 10 minutes."

He had always thought this, but the time for designing the recipe was too short. Actually, designing a recipe with a quality to pass a mission in that timeframe was something that even specialized chefs had difficulty with. If that's the case, then how would these amateurs take it? Of course, in the case of Anderson, Kaya, and Chloe, they all had high cooking levels, but cooking well and being experienced were different things.

Jo Minjoon slowly thought of many recipes. First, it was the basic dishes that used truffle as garnish. And honestly, that was the easiest method. Jo Minjoon first ate a little bite of the truffle. He needed to understand the flavor.

Honestly, he didn't get the feeling that it was delicious. It was a feeling of vinegar mixed with dirt that opened up the hole of your nose. They said that if you kept eating it, you would get to know its charm, but at least it didn't have a special charm.

‘As I can't roast it, I will have to put the flavor as it is on the dish.....’

Just like the thing that was in the box wasn't black truffle but white truffle, you just couldn't roast the truffle itself. Unlike black truffle, you had to eat the white truffle whole to save that aroma. If you boiled it in water and stored it just like in the french method, the aroma would disappear. And because of that, in Italy they preferred white truffle and in the France they preferred black truffle.

So because of that, the recipes Jo Minjoon thought of were mostly Italian dishes. The most normal thing was grating the truffle on the oil pasta. There was also that method of putting it on a meat dish, and making the aroma of meat and the aroma of truffle not collide wasn't a difficult thing to do. And it was also good sprinkling some on a well-made omelette.

‘First, oil pasta, or gratin with macaroni or gnocchi.....’

Thinking about the given time, the latter one was a better option. Because making oil pasta for one hour was really inefficient. Even if you made it slowly, it was a dish that could be completed in 20 minutes. It was obvious that it would become a deducting factor.

If he were to make gnocchi, the problem was in if he could hand make it. You boiled potatoes, cooled it, mixed it with flour and eggs and made the dough. Just doing that would take one hour. Jo Minjoon's eyes became sharper. It was the moment to choose. Was he going to use a commercial gnocchi knowing that the quality was going to fall, or was he going to put up with the danger and hand make it?

‘Cream cheese for the sauce.’

He also thought of putting in tomato sauce, but it was better to use the cream cheese that utilized gorgonzola to not make the aroma clash with the truffle. The combination of gorgonzola and truffle wasn't that bad. First of all, the estimated cooking score that popped up in his head was much better that way. It was at that moment. Alan opened his mouth.

“The time for designing your dishes ended. Everybody start cooking!”

Sound of looking for the ingredients busily was heard in all over the place. However, Jo Minjoon first started to boil the water in a pot. If he started to boil the potatoes even a little late, it was no different to having failed his dish already.

Jo Minjoon first sliced the potato in half. And when it started to boil, he put it on the pot. He had even brought smaller potatoes for it to cook quicker. What remained was for the fire to reduce the time.

Aside from that, the ingredients were simple. Cream, butter, onions, gorgonzola cheese, fresh mozzarella cheese, and salt and pepper.

Jo Minjoon first chopped the onions and took off the moisture. After that, mixed whipping cream and cream on a 1-1 ratio. Then, he fried butter and the onions which moisture was removed on a pan, and when the onion got considerably yellowish he had to put the cream and the gorgonzola cheese.

He waited for the sauce to boil, and Jo Minjoon checked the potatoes. In the first place, they were small potatoes, and because he had sliced it in half, it was already cooked. Jo Minjoon put a bowl on top of ice water and put the potatoes on top of that. It was to cool down the potatoes a little faster.

There was still some time for the cream cheese sauce to boil and for the gorgonzola to melt. Jo Minjoon slightly looked at Kaya. It seemed like she was planning to stew. However, honestly speaking, he didn't want to eat it however she made it. Even if the cooking score was 10, he wasn't planning to eat it. Perhaps, it would be better if it was brain. But to eat that, as a same guy, no, as the same male, it was a sinful food to eat.

‘I don't know if I would vomit eating that.’

Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly and shook his head. It was at that moment when he was feeling the importance of the ingredients. Then, the judges approached them. Joseph asked.

“What are you making?”

“It’s potato gnocchi gratin with cream cheese sauce. I’m planning to place the truffle on top of the finished gratin.”

“The strong aroma of cheese may devour the aroma of truffle. Did you think about that?”

“The proportions would be impor.....”

Jo Minjoon, that was talking, stopped at that moment. Bang! Bang! Those sound kept sounding. And each time, Jo Minjoon flinched. Kaya was holding the phallus of the cow and striking down with her knife. Aside of being bloody and fierce, as a man, it was a scene that could only make you shiver and get goosebumps.

The judges also turned to look. Emily was putting on a funny expression, but Joseph’s and Alan’s faces were a little pale. Kaya seemed to have sensed their sights, but after she slightly turned her head, she looked at them and said while grinning. It was the smile of a devil.

“This is fun. I think I will get addicted to it.”



## Chapter 81: The Unfamiliar One (3)

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Alan shook his head as if he was sick of it. This was one of the ingredients he was opposed to being used in this mission. Precisely speaking, it was an ingredient he disapproved of. There was also the image for the broadcast, but he basically didn't want to eat it. Even if he was a chef, he was still a man. There were many delicious things in the world, so he didn't want to bring that thing to his mouth.

However, it was a story that didn't matter for Martin. When he heard that story, he strongly proposed using cow phallus as an ingredient. He said that in this awful mission, it was an ingredient that could give good pictures, and so it would get good reactions. Alan admitted that his opinion had persuasiveness. But.....

‘That thing will end up entering my mouth.’

He couldn't help but feel sad while thinking about it. It wasn't that he didn't tried cow phallus dishes, but every time he ate it, what he thought was ‘let's not eat it again.’ Would Kaya be able to bring an outstanding flavor capable of changing his thoughts?

Alan stopped thinking for now and looked at Jo Minjoon's countertop. He was already making the dough using eggs, salt and the already cooled and mashed potatoes. Looking at the dough getting large like a snake, Alan admired. The characteristics of a gnocchi dough made by an experienced chef was clearly seen. The dough had a smooth and pudding-like exterior, with an elasticity that stretched stickily. At the least, it was a dough that perfectly followed the basics.

‘He is certainly growing.’

It would be hard to call it as a conspicuous growth. But Jo Minjoon was slowly raising his skills without resting for a minute. He had known that Jo Minjoon wasn't originally a person capable of making that kind of dough. But was it because he was being influenced by the surrounding chefs? At least, he seemed to be more solid because he had the basics.

Alan looked at Emily with a confident face, and Emily put on a confused one when she looked at him. Alan said with a voice that was softer than usual.

“The state of the dough is good. Leaving aside the combination with truffle, I'm really expecting for the flavor of the gnocchi itself.”

“Thank you.”

Because Jo Minjoon saw him walking in front of him constantly, he didn't dislike that he replied shortly like that. Alan smirked and went to another countertop. Emily said in a voice so low she seemed to be telling a secret, and then followed his back.

“I'm expecting it more than Alan. Good luck.”

And when the judges left like that, Jo Minjoon let out a sigh inwardly. Honestly, every time they came, he only felt that his concentration was dispersed. However, it was also a problem he

had to beat. Just because it was a kitchen doesn't mean that it wasn't an atmosphere which you could solely focus on cooking. Customers pile up, and the orders pile up just as much. And at times, dishes return. Only when you didn't get shaken in that situation could you be called a complete cook, a complete chef. But of course, how many people would it amount to that had had a mentality to withstand that?

Jo Minjoon kept brewing the dough he left. After making it long like a snake, the next step should be slicing it by an inch long. After that, it should be fermented for 10 minutes, dipped slightly in water, placed in a container with cheese cream sauce, sprinkled with mozzarella cheese, and baked in the oven.

As he put the dough on the fridge and checked the state of the cheese cream sauce, the gorgonzola had already melted. Jo Minjoon separated that with a sieve and put it on a container for oven use. When he checked the time, he had approximately 25 minutes left. However, he couldn't relax. After he fermented the dough a little more, he just had to bake it in the oven for 17 minutes. There was no reason to hurry.

As he relaxed for a moment and looked around, Kaya was already boiling the stew. Chloe was boiling down the shark fin in a sauce with soy sauce as its base, Anderson fried the sea anemone and was making purée. In the case of Ivanna, she seemed to have put green onion, garlic, bell pepper, mushrooms, and other things in the tripe; placed it in the oven; and then she seemed to be making blueberry purée to use it as a sauce.

In the case of Joanne, she roasted the deer liver like a steak and

seemed to use balsamic sauce as the dressing. For Sasha, the octopus was already in the oven so he couldn't know. For Hugo, it looked like he was boiling the calf brain in a sauce.

‘.....They were mostly roasting it.’

Actually, if you didn't know well how to cook it, roasting it was the easiest choice. Because accompanying it with bechamel sauce, fruits, vegetable purée or whatever seemed to suit, it was easy for the result to be not bad. But of course, you wouldn't know what score it would have.

Time flowed. Jo Minjoon took out the dough from the fridge and put it on boiling water. Originally, you had to cook it for 3-5 minutes to have a good consistency, but as he was going to cook it again in the oven, he only needed 1-2 minutes.

From now on, every minute was a sensitive one. Jo Minjoon took out the gratin gnocchi with a sieve and put it on the oven use container that had the cheese cream sauce. After he had sprinkled some mozzarella cheese, he put it in the preheated oven on 170 degrees.

He just had to wait. Jo Minjoon just looked at the clock impatiently. Rather than the first 10 minutes, the next five and the next two minutes were felt much slower. And when exactly 17 minutes passed like that, Jo Minjoon took out the container and put on a smile. Even if you were an experienced chef, the only thing you could be certain of when you looked at the dish was that the mozzarella cheese was well-cooked, but Jo Minjoon was different.

[Potato gnocchi gratin]

Freshness : 93%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to know)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 7/10

It was 7 points even in a state without the truffle. Maybe...? He didn't think that. In the first time, the cooking score was just like he had estimated it to be. Grating truffle wasn't a factor that could raise the cooking score from 7 to 8. In the first place, it was a simple thing that didn't even require skill, but you wouldn't know if the truffle could make a fantastic combination with the potato gnocchi gratin..... But that was also not it.

Actually, even if you grated the white truffle on top of the cheese, nothing much would change. But that much was also good. Because it wasn't a combination that lessened the flavor, as so the cooking score.

He couldn't eat the food, so he only smelled it a bit. The special aroma of truffle that harmonized with the aroma of smell and the dirt was.....honestly speaking, it was only special. It wasn't an excessively charming aroma.

‘Why do they like this?’

He felt the same way when the judges ate the foie gras one of the world's three great delicacies. Although it was a word used only in

Korea and Japan, he thought that the name was because of the price, because just the price was outstanding. However, in the case of foie gras, it was only a liver full of fat. Although the flavor was deep, precisely because it was too deep, it was a flavor you would reject.

‘Even if your tasting level is 8, are you unable to enjoy every food?’

But actually, the reason he couldn’t enjoy the ingredients properly wasn’t because there was a problem with his tongue, but because those were unfamiliar ingredients. Those were food you couldn’t eat easily, and people that enjoyed it were also scarce. Even Korea’s Pyongyang Naengmyeon (평양냉면) was difficult to properly enjoy if you didn’t eat it many times.

Basically, he was the sensitive type for tasting. He could feel the flavor better than normal people, but it was difficult to compare him with Kaya.

“Everybody take your hands off!”

Joseph yelled with a blunt voice. However, in the case of Chloe, she could only put on a bewildered face. It seemed like she couldn’t keep track of time, but her shark fin was still in a state where it was still inside the pot. Chloe looked at the judges with a teary face, but they shook their heads calmly.

“Chloe. Bring your food with the pan. Rules are rules.”

“.....Yes.”

The participants looked at Chloe with regretful faces. Emily opened her mouth with a calm voice.

“It must have been a difficult mission. Although I’m not a chef, I know that you have done the best you could. You have done well. We will start the evaluation. Kaya, come to the front.”

Alan was the type to eat the worst apples first if there was 10 . He looked at Kaya’s stew with a dispirited face. The vegetables and the piece of meat was showing only half of it because it was covered by a red soup that seemed to be spicy. At first glance, it seemed to be delicious..... But he let out a sigh. Kaya said with a provocative face.

“It’s penis stew.”

“.....I know the name. There’s no need to tell me that.”

Alan grumbled with a mean voice and hesitated while looking at the dish in front of him for a long while. In the end, Emily couldn’t hold it anymore, and lifted her spoon and drank the soup. She nodded.

“First, the flavor of the soup is good. I could barely detect a fishy smell. Did you put in coriander?”

“Yes. I put in coriander and a lot of garlic. And I also put in some lime juice.”

“Mmm.....It’s a stew that gives a strong impression of being from Northeast Asia. The meat.....”

Emily chewed a big piece of meat along with some vegetables. Alan and Joseph looked at her as if they were looking at something heterogeneous, but she didn't pay them any heed. She smiled while putting a calm face.

“You saved the meat well..... And the combination with the other ingredients isn't bad at all. It's to the point I want to ask Jo Minjoon the score of it.....”

Emily looked at Jo Minjoon, and he evaded her sight desperately. He didn't want to bring that thing to his mouth when there wasn't even much to say about her dish. Emily smacked her lips as if it was unfortunate.

“Well, we can clearly see that he isn't even thinking of eating it.”

“It can't be helped. Can a chef be picky with food?”

Kaya sneered and said. He got enraged in that instant, but Jo Minjoon didn't say anything. He got a bad feeling that if he did say something, he would have to eat that thing. However, his guess was only half true. Alan's voice rang.

“There is some truth in Kaya's words. Minjoon, come here.”

“.....Yes, Why me?”

“Because just like she said, chefs can't be picky about food. And since you have such a sensitive sense of taste, there's even more need to get accustomed to this special ingredient, since you would be able to taste a delicate flavor others can't get the grasp of. This is an opportunity I'm giving to you.”



Those were some long words. When he first heard it, it seemed reasonable, and he also heard it as if it was directed to him. Why did he feel it like he didn't want to die alone so he was bringing Jo Minjoon too along with him? Jo Minjoon flapped the neck part of his clothes. He got sweaty. Joseph laughed 'hoho' and said.

“Alan's words are correct. Thinking about your sense of taste, I get the feeling that letting this opportunity to try an unfamiliar dish pass is a waste. Minjoon, challenge it. Chefs can't evade challenges about ingredients.”

“.....What about the other participants?”

As Jo Minjoon said that and turned back to look at the other participants, they glared at him with a disgusted face. Joseph smiled and shook his head.

“Unfortunately, the amount of the food and the time doesn't allow us that. I think that the other participants wouldn't hate sending you as their representative...”

“There's no need to say this, but Minjoon has the most outstanding sense of taste among us. So it's an obvious thing to send him as our representative.”

Anderson said with a calm face. He slightly looked at Jo Minjoon and raised the corner of his mouth.

‘.....I fell for their trap.’

He could do nothing about it if the atmosphere turned out like this. He thought that maybe Martin would side up with him, but he was smiling so wide that Minjoon thought that his mouth would get ripped.

Even Chloe was smiling faintly, so he had no one on his side. Jo Minjoon moved his feet with a face that was as pathetic as a cow being dragged to the slaughterhouse. And then, he glared at him Alan. Those eyes were so fierce it didn't make you think of his usual gentle eyes.

“Why isn't chef eating yet?”

“.....I was just about to. Here, take it.”

Alan gave a spoon to Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon received the spoon and after hesitating for a moment, he ate the smallest piece of meat along with some vegetable. At first he wasn't moving his jaw, but in front of all of the judges gazes, he could only start to chew. He wasn't planning on just gulping it since it was a dish made by Kaya. Thinking about the effort the chef placed on the dish, he couldn't treat it as if it was garbage.

‘.....I feel rejected, really.’

Just like Emily had said, the meat was sticky, but even that stickiness made him feel bad. The dense aroma of the cow that spread in his mouth was also bad. At least, it was good that there was the flavor of the sauce. If she had grilled it normally with only salt, he wouldn't be confident in being able to eat it. It was difficult to eat it, with a different meaning than foie gras. Each time he

chewed, he got a feeling he was hearing the cow mooing from somewhere.

As Jo Minjoon ate it, Alan too could only start to eat. They put the stew in their mouths with a determined face. Although there was some hesitation before eating, after they ate it, they certainly looked like pros. Alan said with a calm expression.

“You parboiled the phallus first and then put it in sauce, right?”

“Yes.”

“Perhaps, if you hadn’t, you wouldn’t have been able to get this flavor. Perhaps I would have oscillated at the special fishy smell of guts. But how did you know of this method? Didn’t you not cook this before?”

“I have cooked tripe a few times. I know well how the flavor changes if you parboil it or not. I also know that the phallus is a gut.”

Kaya put on a proud expression as if she was content with herself knowing that difficult thing. But of course, it was seen as a conceited smile, but Jo Minjoon could read that. Was it because the time they were together was long? It was certainly easier to read her.

Joseph looked at Jo Minjoon.

“What’s the score?”

“.....7 points.”

Soon, the score became an inquiry even for the judges. Emily nodded.

“Mmm. I also thought that it would score that. Excellent, Kaya. To get 7 points with a penis stew.”

With Kaya putting on a faint smile, the evaluation ended. However, just because of that, it wasn't that he could return to his place.

“Now that you are here, let's try your dish.”

At those words, he could only bring the pot that contained the gnocchi gratin immediately. Emily opened her mouth after she tried his food.

“What do you think is the score of this?”

It was at that moment when Jo Minjoon was about to reply unconsciously. Emily grinned.

“I thought like that, but thinking about it, you still didn't eat it right? Eat it. You have to know how your own food turned out.”

Actually, he already knew even without putting it in his mouth, but there was no reason to point that out. Jo Minjoon put the potato gnocchi gratin in his mouth. The flavor of the white truffle, vinegar, dirt, and the dense flavor of the mushroom stuck in his mouth. The sticky white truffle didn't disappear like before. Even

if he chewed the parts that didn't have white truffle, the aroma kept roaming in his mouth.

However, it wasn't a bad combination. The thing that could turn out greasy because of the cheese was being covered by the white truffle. Jo Minjoon nodded.

"It is delicious."

".....It's a little strange that you are saying that with your own mouth."

"I can't say that it is not. It's 7 points. At least, it is plenty for me to say that it is delicious."

"Good. If it wasn't, I wouldn't have admitted it, but at least your bluffing is fine for this dish. Return to your place, Minjoon. You, too, have passed."

At Alan's words, Jo Minjoon clenched his fists without saying anything. He had already done 6 missions, but every time he survived, he got a feeling as if he had succeeded.

"Chloe, you are next. Come to the front!"

Chloe went to the front with her pot with a nervous face. Joseph just looked at that pot and opened his mouth.

".....You can't serve something that hasn't been plated. You know that it will deduct some points, right?"

"Yes, I do....."

“Good. I hope that your shark fin becomes so delicious to be able to recover from that mistake.”

At Alan’s words, Chloe didn’t say anything and kept rubbing her hands. The injured part still hurt. Now that she was nervous, she felt that the pain got worse. Alan just looked at Chloe’s hands for a little bit, and sliced the shark fin, and brought it to his mouth. He seemed to be chewing it for a bit, and then gulped it. And then, Alan turned back without saying a thing. Chloe felt her insides burning, so she just kept touching her apron. Joseph and Emily were the same. After they ate the shark fin, they didn’t say a thing. Just like they had agreed beforehand.....

Chloe unconsciously looked back. And the participants sent her cheering sights as if it was going to be okay. Chloe met Jo Minjoon’s eyes. At that moment, Jo Minjoon’s eyes bent softly. Then, she could feel that she was getting calm. Chloe mumbled inwardly.

‘Right. Chloe. You came all the way here. Cheer up. Even if you do get eliminated, you did really well. And.....’

She couldn’t say the last part even inside of her.

And then, the time for her evaluation came.

## Chapter 82: The Unfamiliar One (4)

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Shark fin soup, this dish that was also called as wich(위츠) in china, could be categorized in two. A brown soup that had a dense colour, and a blue stew that had a lot of soup. And Chloe's dish was a brown soup, and her shark fin had a sweet flavor like [dongpo pork](#).

The first thing an epicurean would see when they evaluated a Chinese restaurant was how the chef handled shark fin. The difficulty of cooking shark fin, among the thousands of Chinese dishes, was so difficult it could enter the top 5. But it wasn't that it needed special preparations. Actually, if the quality of the ingredient was good, then the dish was already half completed. If you weren't an epicurean, you could eat all of that deliciously. Not having flavor or aroma meant that you weren't fond of it.

However, it was different for epicureans. The stem-like texture of the shark fin was an obvious thing, but compared to other dishes, the measuring stick shark fin had was strictly based on the sauce or the soup. It was unavoidable. You could save the plain flavor of shark fin, and didn't miss out on the original flavor of the other ingredients. Perhaps, you would tolerate it more if this shark fin was a cheap ingredient, but shark fin was an ingredient that if the quality was good, then the price would also soar through the skies. And obviously, the price of that dish could only be expensive, and if that food you inverted money on lacked even a little something..... It was also obvious that you would buy the rage of the epicureans.

And it wasn't an exemption because they were judges. They felt the flavor more sensitively than usual, and they tried hard to feel

the sticky shark fin they chewed. And their evaluations all matched.

Joseph opened his mouth.

“Chloe, what do you think is the standard for a well-made shark fin soup?”

“.....I think that it’s cooking it so the texture of the shark fin doesn’t crumble, and at the same time, controlling the flavor of the sauce for it to be not too excessive.”

“And do you think that your shark fin meets those standards?”

“I’m begging for it. At least, the best I could.....do, I can’t say that. Because I couldn’t even do the plating properly. But at least, I think that I have tried my best for the flavor. ....Is it not?”

She seemed to have some confidence, but in the end, Chloe’s voice lost confidence in the last parts. She could only do so. Because the cooking method for shark fin she knew came only by helping her mother.

And because of that, she tried the seasoning harder than ever, checked the state of the pan and the fire, and tried hard to focus on the ingredients and her situation. It was a dish which she did her best desperately than ever. But..... Just because of that, it didn’t mean that you would get good food. Alan said with a hard voice.

“Do you know that the bigger a shark is, the more mercury it contains in its body?”

“Yes.”



“Then, only by eating a bite of this shark fin may have consumed a week of your life span, can you ascertain that this dish had that worth?”

At Alan’s questions, Chloe couldn’t reply anything. Emily let out a sigh and said.

“Chloe, our opinions about your dish all matched. One week of life span?”

It was at that moment. From the frozen face of Emily bloomed a smile. At that sudden change, Chloe couldn’t even get perplexed and just shook the muscles of her face.

“It was a soup that I could even give 15 days, instead of a week!”

“.....Yes?”

“I’m saying that your shark fin was perfect. Chloe, Relax. Why is someone that made this kind of dish shaking like that?”

After Emily said happily, Joseph smiled faintly and continued to say.

“Emily said that she could give 15 days instead of a week, but as someone old, I can’t agree to that. Because in 15 days, you can eat a lot of different foods. But at the last moment, when my flame of life is about to extinguish, I think that I would remember your shark fin soup.”

Chloe didn’t reply anything. Her double eyelids seemed to shake

like a puppy because of the shock, and tears slowly started to gather on her eyes. She lifted her two hands and covered her face. However, she couldn't hide the sobbing voice. Emily hugged Chloe's shoulders with a sorry face.

“We made the atmosphere really heavy, right? I'm sorry.”

“No, no. It's not that.....”

Chloe sobbed and wiped off her tears. Her double eyelids that were carved deeper than usual made her eyes to be seen more clearly. She opened her eyes as if she wanted to say something, but she seemed to feel stuffed and let out a 'whew'ing sigh again.

Jo Minjoon just looked at that Chloe. Because she had presented the pot itself, it became a deducting factor, but he wasn't worried at all. It wasn't that his feelings for Chloe were light at all, it was that he didn't have the need to get worried. Her score.....

“I'm sorry. I got too nervous.....relyved, ugh..... it's because I feel relieved.”

She seemed to be really nervous that she even twisted her tongue. Alan smirked and looked at her, and slightly glanced at Jo Minjoon.

“Minjoon.”

“Yes. I'm going.”

Jo Minjoon walked to the front as if he was waiting for it. Alan

laughed as if it was absurd.

“I still didn’t tell you to come out.”

“You even made me eat the cow phallus for my tasting experience, and I also think that it would be the same for this shark fin. Is it not?”

“.....Score it.”

Jo Minjoon put the shark fin in his mouth with a face full of expectation. He thought that when the sauce immediately touched his tongue, the texture of shark fin was a little different to what he had thought. He thought that it would be closer to jelly, but it seemed more like a round vegetable. However, it was still fresh and good. He wondered that if a well-ripened bellflower got more elasticity, it would feel like this.

The sauce was also good. It seemed like there was some cinnamon, star anise, and something else mixed in soy sauce, but there was a soft flavor hidden in the dense aroma. The shredded radish or onions that are together with it, saves their original flavor densely and filled the empty flavor of shark fin. Jo Minjoon smiled. He wasn’t opposed at all to cooking nationalities, but he didn’t know why he remembered the moment he had a meal in Rose Island.

Just with food, people could get happy. There was no happier moment when those words were felt in your tongue. A nice smile appeared on Jo Minjoon’s face. It was a smile so clear that if it became a little bit denser, his mouth would rip.

“It’s the best.”

“.....What does that mean?”

“It’s just like I have said. It’s a compliment, and at the same time an explanation. The flavor is the best, and the technique is also the best. It’s also the best of what she cooked until now.....”

Jo Minjoon paused for a moment. He could feel the judges gulping and their gazes looking at his lip. And when he saw that, he felt somewhat pleasant. Jo Minjoon raised the corner of his mouth and said.

“It’s the best dish that appeared in Grand Chef’s house until now.”

“Maybe.....”

Alan opened his mouth as if he was surprised. Jo Minjoon nodded.

“Yes. It’s 9 points.”

The reason why he didn’t worry at all despite her big mistake was in this. It was the first 9 points. And he believed that she wouldn’t get eliminated because of her 9-point dish.

Chloe shook her head as if she couldn’t believe it. She opened her mouth and said with a confused voice.

“There’s no way. I have never cooked shark fin properly

before.....”

“The first time that I made an 8 points dish was when I made risotto. And I didn’t have much experience making risotto.”

“.....I made a 9 points dish? Really?”

Jo Minjoon smiled brightly.

“You are a good chef. I’m not surprised at all that you got a 9-point dish first among us.”

“But I.....”

Chloe paused for a moment. She was a chef that didn’t even have certainty on walking in this path. No, actually, she was only a person that knew how to cook well. She couldn’t say those words in front of the other participants. Joseph opened his mouth and said with a low and soft voice.

“Minjoon’s words are correct. 9 Points. Although I don’t know his correct standards, giving 9 points to the contents of this pot, isn’t lacking at all. The control of the fine flavor, it was a soup I could feel the basics you have accumulated until now.”

“Not putting many kinds of vegetables was also a good choice. The moment the flavor got mixed, there’s a high possibility that the shark fin would only take a small part between those ingredients. From now on, I ask your dishes to be like what you had made today, Chloe.”

Alan laughed properly in a while and continued saying. Chloe unconsciously looked at Emily. Emily laughed gently and said.

“Perhaps, even if your shark fin soup came out in a big Chinese restaurant, I would still have eaten it in a good mood. Thank you for letting me eat something delicious.”

At Emily’s smile, Chloe started to cry again. Jo Minjoon lent her his handkerchief and said.

“You can also blow your nose.”

“.....Thanks. But I can’t let out any snot.”

Even after saying that, the next moment Chloe was already sniffing. Chloe blushed and turned her head away. Alan, that was looking at the two of them, glanced towards Kaya. She usually had a fierce face, but at this moment, her eyes felt sharper than usual. Alan grinned and opened his mouth.

“Minjoon, you can return. If I have to call you again, I will. And I’m talking about calf brain or sea anemone.”

“.....I will be expecting it.”

The momentary happiness crumbled in an instant. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and returned to his place. Joseph was observing Chloe, who was trying to not sob, but he opened his mouth as if he was feeling more emotional.

“Don’t cry, Chloe, and don’t lower yourself. You know how to make something this delicious. It’s something I thought when I looked at you. Compared to the skills you have, you are really

insecure. What's the reason? Do you think that you are not an excellent person?"

".....I will tell you honestly. I don't know the path I have to walk. Cooking is obviously what I want to do the most and what I like the most. However, I don't know that just because I like it, choosing my life is the correct option..... I know that. That perhaps, if I start to think that I can't enjoy cooking anymore, I will probably give up."

Chloe said what she was holding until now. Joseph looked at her eyes acting like that. And Chole unconsciously evaded his sight. Even if he was an old man, his eyes were excessively transparent and pure. Joseph continued talking.

"You don't only enjoy cooking. However, if you properly start it, there will be no way that you will get sick of it. Chloe. If you don't become a chef, what do you want to do?"

".....I think that I would become a forensic scientist."

At the reply that didn't suit her at all, laughter flowed. However, that wasn't the case for Joseph. Joseph nodded seriously and continued talking.

"You are a good chef and a good person. And you will probably also be able to become a good forensic. However, talking about my personal desires, I hope that you will become a chef. I believe that you will be able to shine more as a chef rather than a forensic scientist."

".....Why is that?"

"I'm curious at the dishes you will be cooking from now on. Of

course.....I will probably have risen to the sky before being able to try all of that.”

Joseph talked like that and smiled faintly. Chloe too, laughed after moving her mouths that still had the marks of the tears.

The evaluation went on. Somehow, Jo Minjoon ate the food of the other participants as if it became something obvious. He looked at Martin asking for rescue, but it seemed like he had permitted this situation. It wasn't that Jo Minjoon's evaluation would influence the results, so thinking of it as a fun factor was nothing strange.

Anderson got 8 points with the sea anemone that didn't seem suitable to cook at all.

After covering the sea anemone in cornstarch and fring it, you served it along with smoked paprika purée. It was that simple. But how could he save each of the flavor that well? It was easy for his fried sea anemone to be delicious, but it was instantly crushed by the point that it was difficult to make it have a deep flavor.

However, not everyone could propagate like Anderson. Joanne roasted the deer liver well, and also succeeded in making a mango yoghurt sauce that suited it well. However, she couldn't catch the bad smell. And the result was that the score was 5.

In the case of Ivanna, she was fine. She applied butter on the tripe, put vegetables inside of it, and then baked it. She also presented a blueberry purée and she got good comments. It was unavoidable because the combination of butter and blueberry



purée was really good. 6 points. It was a fine grade.

Hugo boiled down the brain in brown sauce, as if he was making ossobuco. Although the score was 6, it was eatable. He thought that the brain was going to crumble like tofu, but the unexpected elasticity was also a fresh experience.

Lastly, Sasha parboiled the octopus, applied basil and garlic, and roasted it. It was an easy choice, and it was an easy 6 points. Now that the situation became like this, although you wouldn't know about the others, Jo Minjoon could clearly see it with his eyes who was going to get eliminated. He looked at Joanne's back with regretful eyes.

“We will announce the eliminated participant.”

And there were no upsets.

# Chapter 83: Scandal (1)

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“Don’t make that face, Ivanna.”

Ivanna slowly stroked Joanne’s hair while putting on a teary face. Ivanna bit her lips and hugged Joanne.

“I will also do your share.”

“Yeah. Win. I will be cheering for you.”

Joanne smiled and patted Ivanna’s back. Perhaps, it could be seen that the one being consoled changed, but Joanne didn’t mind. Rather, as Ivanna was having it hard, she felt a bit better. Was it because she felt that she got a really good friend?

She slightly glanced at the other participants. Honestly speaking, at one point Joanne started to think that she wouldn’t be able to win. Thinking of winning, the other participants were too strong. Especially in Anderson’s case, she thought that he would be able to work as a sous chef in a relatively famous restaurant, or perhaps even as the head chef because he wasn’t lacking on the basics.

“.....Whew, I did know that this day would come.”

Joanne mumbled bitterly. Eliminated. The day that tag got placed on her name was today. Anderson opened his mouth slowly.

“You have done well.”

“You sure are blunt. Until the end, really short.”

“Shut up.”

Anderson evaded her sight as if it was awkward. It was like this every time, but the parting time wasn't an easy one. But just because of that, she couldn't leave the place immediately because she still had to do the interview. Before finishing the interview, she couldn't part ways in a sloppy way.

Perhaps, they had given her more time to be together, but for Joanne, she felt this time to be bothersome. If anyone became a target of regretful sights, they would only feel that place to be difficult.

She had to change the atmosphere. Joanne turned to look at Chloe that was next to her. And after holding her hands, she raised the corner of her mouth.

“Cheer up. I hope you gain it.”

She didn't mean to gain victory. Chloe blushed and smiled awkwardly. She didn't really say anything, but it was also funny to negate it and mention Jo Minjoon. Joanne slightly looked towards Jo Minjoon and changed subjects.

“Now that I see Minjoon, you said that Chloe's dish was 9 points. Was it that delicious?”

“.....Honestly speaking, shark fin isn't such a delicious ingredient. It doesn't have flavor or aroma, and only has the

texture. Perhaps, epicureans could have found something in that..... But I still haven't learned to do tasting like they do. But it was certainly a surprisingly good dish, to the point it made me wonder if it really was her first time."

"It is not my first. I have made it sometime with my mom. But of course, it is also difficult to say that I do have experience, because I wasn't the one leading....."

"I think that your mother does certainly cook really well. You said that you learned almost all of the dishes you know from your mother."

"Yeah."

Chloe smiled embarrassedly and nodded. Jo Minjoon was certainly most envious of Anderson and Chloe from the ones that were here. Chloe had learnt cooking through her mother, and Anderson's parents were professional chefs. So how many excellent dishes had they had eaten since childhood? Joanne smirked and asked again.

"So, was Kaya's dish delicious?"

".....Don't ask me that again. I don't want to remember that again in my entire life."

"Are you bad mouthing my dish right now?"

"I'm not bad mouthing.....no, think with common sense. Would you have liked it if I gave that to you to eat?"

"I told you. You are a failure as a chef. Why are you picky about ingredients? Do you know how much it costs? I eat everything because it really is a waste."

Kaya's face was serious. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth with a

sickened face.

“Don’t you have preferences for food?”

“Well, I didn’t live such a harsh life as to not have preferences.”

She said with a self-mocking voice. Jo Minjoon opened his eyes sharply and opened his mouth.

“Fried chicken, what part do you like the most?”

“Wing. ....No, wait. This is a little different.”

“That is also a preference?”

Kaya frowned her angered eyes and shut her mouth. She didn’t have the words to reply back. Joanne that was looking at them happily asked a question again at Chloe.

“But can I ask you why you cried before? I never imagined that you would cry. Because you are always in a good mood.”

“.....It’s a bit embarrassing to reply.”

“No, what’s there to be embarrassed about? Girls are the prettiest when they cry.”

“Then why don’t you cry now? I think that it’s just the right time for you to cry.”

Anderson said as if he was teasing her. Joanne frowned.

“I won’t be able to marry that jerk in my whole life.”

“I’m a celibate.”

“.....You were?”

At Anderson’s words, Jo Minjoon put a more surprised face. Anderson nodded as if it wasn’t important.

“I don’t think that it’s something to be that surprised.”

“No, I didn’t feel that from you at all.....”

“Minjoon, don’t believe him yet. Guys like him who claim to be celibates tend to marry earlier than anyone.”

“.....Now that I think about it, there’s also a similar saying in Korea.”

At Joanne’s words, Jo Minjoon nodded as if he had assented. Anderson frowned and said.

“Don’t judge about others beliefs as you want.”

“Sorry, I wasn’t planning on picking a fight.”

She smiled and raised both of her hands. He couldn’t seem to keep saying something at her when he had already received an apology. Anderson gulped down the dissatisfaction and looked away.

Kaya that was just looking at the both of them argue, said with a mocking voice as if it didn’t make sense.

“What is this? Do you like each other?”

Silence flowed for a moment. Anderson raised one brow and looked at Kaya. Joanne was also putting a similar face. Kaya shrugged her shoulders and said.

“Then leave it.”

“That was a terrible question.”

Joanne trembled as if she didn't even want to think about that. Kaya replied with a calm voice.

“You are always like this with me and Minjoon.”

At her words, Joanne shut her mouth as if she had nothing to reply back. Jo Minjoon smirked and lent his palm. Kaya's mouth twitched and looked at the palm.

The first one the staff called was Joanne. And as she left, the tense atmosphere eased up a bit. Chloe let out a sigh and said while looking at Jo Minjoon.

“Thanks for today.”

“For what?”

“For the handkerchief, and for the 9 points.”

“I just said the score as it was. There's no need to thank me at the results you got by yourself.”

“Even so, I feel thankful.”

Chloe laughed brightly like a baby. Jo Minjoon just scratched his nose with an awkward face. Chloe smacked her lips after hesitating for a minute and then, she slowly continued talking.

“Actually, I wasn’t really confident even while making it. I did my best than ever but.....I really wondered if it was fine. Before the evaluation, you smiled with your eyes. Surprisingly, that comforted me. Actually, that was even before you drank my soup, so you wouldn’t even have known how the flavor was.....Strange, right?”

“.....It’s a relief if it comforted you. What’s there to be strange? In the end, people’s thoughts are their own feelings.”

“Anyways, I wanted to thank you if I survived. No. Even if I got eliminated, I would have felt grateful to you.”

There was no need to think about what to reply. Joanne came out from the interviewing room and called Jo Minjoon.

“I’m done. Minjoon, they said to go in.”

“Yeah, understood.”

Chloe seemed to have something left to say, but she couldn’t make the staff in the interviewing room wait. As soon as Jo Minjoon got in the room, Martin laughed teasingly and said.

“I hope that it became a good meal to you.”

“.....I’m not thankful nor resentful. Although it was a good meal, there were some things that I absolutely had to wash off from my mouth.”



The shock Kaya's stew gave him still didn't disappear. Still, as Chloe's shark fin's flavor was deeper than what he had thought, he felt less sorry for his tongue. Jo Minjoon said while smiling bitterly.

"The proposal I got last time, about the tasting travel, I did think about that for a bit, but after what I have experienced today my heart seems to have turned away from it."

".....Understood. It was my bad. So don't scare me like this. I'm really expecting you to join us. Is that true?"

"Am I also going to eat that kind of food there? Chui tofu (취두부), Surströmming, roasted tarantula, or monkey's medulla."

"Ey, will I really do that?"

Martin smiled. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh. Even so, he didn't know if he was going to participate in that program or not. Because if he won, then it would become a story that never happened. Martin asked with a calm voice.

"I know that this was your first time trying cow phallus, how did you feel?"

"It was horrible. Aside from cooking well or not, it's an ingredient that you don't want to bring it to your mouth, honestly."

"Ey, if you are a chef, you should be able to eat that much."

".....That's job discrimination. Look at the judges. It seemed like even they didn't want to eat that. Well, Emily ate it well..... But in the first place, she's not a chef but an epicurean."

Jo Minjoon grumbling like this in the interviewing room was really a strange thing. That meant that today's experience wasn't good at all. It was at that moment when Martin was putting on a sorry face. The youngest PD, Robert came to Martin with a serious face and whispered something. And at that moment, Martin's face also froze.

'What could it be?' Jo Minjoon sent a confused sight. Martin hesitated for a moment, but in the end he stood up.

"I'm sorry. Let's have some resting time."

"Is there a problem?"

"It's not Minjoon's problem. ....No, perhaps, it could also become your problem. But first, rest for a moment."

Martin passed by Jo Minjoon's confused face and went to the staff. He frowned heavily and said.

"Who wrote what comment?"

"It's a comment that was uploaded about two days ago. She claims to be school mates with Kaya..... But aside from being true or not, it's being paid a lot of attention among the people. Here, look at this."

Tess Gilly : I have something to say. I was schoolmates with Kaya in middle school, but the Kaya Lotus I know and the one that is being broadcasted were quite different? Well, it's true that she's poor and learnt bad things. And her character is dirty as it is

shown on the broadcast. But a victim the dark side of the world gave birth to, a neighbor we can understand. Looking at these expressions I couldn't hold it in anymore. That girl isn't on the level of going through puberty. On top of being a screwball, she's a ragpicker among ragpickers. Just look at the relation with Jo. She went to cook but she is flirting there. That's the reality for that bitch. Just because she sold some fruit on the market and took care of her younger sister, she doesn't become a good person. And.....

“Why are her words this harsh?”

Martin frowned. However he put it, his affection towards Kaya had grown a lot. But of course, he didn't know how Kaya would be thinking about him, but looking at her past and her actions, he wanted to take care of her as a niece. So there was no way that this kind of slander would be satisfying.

“You will know if you see it, but there are at least 500 replies only in that comment. Just counting the people that could have seen it, it would amount to a thousand, if not to ten thousands. And also thinking about the rumour that's going to be spread by their mouths..... In the worst case, we don't know if it would become an issue that's going to be written in an article.”

“.....Make a call to every newspaper office. That if by chance this becomes an article, they would immediately feel the defamation of their character.”

“Will they fear that? It's only a civil affair at most.....”

“Then do we only watch without doing a thing?”

“If we rather use that as noise marketing like Peter.....”

Martin let out a deep sigh. He looked at Robert pitifully as if he didn't know what to do with him.

“Are you really saying that? In your eyes, the cases of Kaya and Peter seem the same? Kaya is bringing us 30% of the rating! Kaya's scandal will not become noise marketing, but just noise. We will also not be able to appeal the couple relationship to the viewers, and her evil character will also crumble.”

“.....What can we do?”

“I don't know.”

Martin replied impertinently and fell in his thoughts. He suddenly remembered the words Kaya once said on an interview.

‘The stage of getting closer. I have experienced it with many people. 18. It seems to be a short life, but it isn't. I have met fine people and also suffering people. The stage of getting closer, I did have it. However, I couldn't completely get close. It was just pretending to be close, that I had it. But in the end, they all left.’

## Chapter 84: Scandal (2)

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Perhaps among those who had left her, Tess Gilly could have been among them. No, looking at the situation, it was almost certain.

But first, confirming it came first. Although there was no guarantee that Kaya would tell the truth.....If she were to lie, with would only backfire on her. They could only wait for her to choose a clear option.

Martin moved his feet. He, who sat in front of Jo Minjoon with an exhausted face, smiled. Jo Minjoon looked at him with a somewhat anxious face.

“What happened? You said that it was somewhat related to me.”

“.....Well, there’s no need to hide it, so I will just tell you. A scandal regarding Kaya exploded.”

“A scandal?”

“It seems like it is related to her middle school days, but we aren’t certain yet. The important thing is that many people already read it, and we think that it will soon become a big topic.”

“Does Kaya know of this?”

“Not yet, but she will soon because she has to hear being a jerk.”

Jo Minjoon’s eyes became dark. It was something that he vaguely knew. That there was a case bigger than what he had thought in Kaya’s school days because Kaya herself had said it when she became a star chef later on.

Although he didn't remember the name, he had heard that she was once close with Kaya. However, she was from an upper class, thus it was what separated them.

When they became so distant with each other to the point that they couldn't even look at each other, Tess earned a scar on her body that she had to carry for life, so Kaya could only drop out of school. But it wasn't a problem for Kaya. Although Kaya was the bad type, Tess wasn't much different. However, the one who got a scar was Tess. If the situation was the opposite, Kaya would still be attending school.

Did a scandal like this happen? It was something that didn't happen in Jo Minjoon's memories. Perhaps he could have influenced it. If there was a difference with Kaya's original life, the existence of Jo Minjoon was all of it. Originally, she would have faced the broadcast much darker than she was right now, but due to that, she lived every day more cheerfully. That could be what triggered the person who slandered Kaya, the trigger that originally shouldn't have been pulled. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“.....When are you planning to tell her?”

“Right after our interview ends. This kind of problem is better handled the faster it is solved.”

“Whew.....Right.”

Thinking about Kaya that suffering from that ill comment for a long while, he didn't feel good at all. Perhaps they were being considerate of Jo Minjoon's feelings, but the interview didn't continue for long. After he forced himself to smile and reply to

some formal interview questions, he went out the room and he saw Kaya leaning on the wall. He slightly glanced at her hand, but fortunately he didn't see her handphone.

“What are you doing here?”

“I'm waiting for the interview.”

Kaya replied shortly. He didn't know why, but he felt that her voice was filled with disdain. Jo Minjoon asked with a dubious voice.

“Did I do something wrong?”

“You were always like way, as if I'm about to get angry. I'm not angry!”

“I think that you are right now.”

Kaya's eyes twitched.

“You are gentle to the likes of Chloe and you even gave her your handkerchief, but why do you always look at me like a troublemaker? I know that I couldn't learn and I'm poor. But I'm tactful and have my pride, so stop treating me like a kid.”

He wanted to refute back something at her words like a habit, but he shut his mouth. Thinking about it, it wasn't unreasonable that she was talking like this. Just like when a parent open their mouths with good will, those words would mostly be heard as a lecture.....If he said that it wasn't the case, she would be pestering him until he got sick of it. He replied with a bitter face.

“I’m sorry.”

“.....Don’t apologize. Why are you getting serious again?”

She felt like she had grumbled a lot, and she grumbled with a little embarrassed face. Jo Minjoon just looked at her. He wondered if she would be able to endure at the soon to come situation. Thinking that the future changed because of him, he felt really sorry. He said in a rather low voice.

“When you get in, you will hear something unexpected.”

“Unexpected?”

“It’s not a good thing, but you must endure and don’t crumble. Also, don’t get hurt and I would like it if you can just let it pass.”

“What is it? Why are you making the atmosphere this heavy?”

Kaya looked at him with an uneasy face. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly.

“I believe in you, so don’t be that uneasy. Because at least, one people will still be at your side until the end.”

—

The interview ended. Kaya ignored everyone’s worried faces and went to her room. No one could hold her back because the rage on her face could clearly be seen. No, perhaps, it would be more accurate to call it horror instead of rage.



However, no one could ask her how she was feeling. The problem wasn't in the door that closed with a banging sound. No one knew what kind of words they needed to say to her.

On the bed, Kaya buried her face on the pillow and yelled. Just like her yell that couldn't be spread properly, the stuffiness she couldn't express filled her chest.

Tess Gilly. She thought that there would be no way that the name that made her grind her teeth just by thinking of it would appear again in her life.

“Crazy bitch. Now, she even became a novelist.”

Kaya looked at the comments in the screen and twitched her nose. Although it was written in a long way, the contents were simple. Kaya was one of the worst problematic kids in school, and although she did become friends with Kaya, only violence returned to her. Kaya laughed as if it was absurd. However, that smile froze hard and her mouth shook like a growling dog.

Kaya Lotus : I'm Kaya Lotus. If you are going to say this kind of dog shit, why don't you say it in my face? You still couldn't fix your mitomania? Shit-like tongue.....

It was at that moment when Kaya was about to reply because of her rage. A call alarm appeared on the screen and she saw a familiar name. It was Gemma Lotus, her sister. Kaya stopped for a moment, and she relaxed the muscles of her face, and put on an awkward smile. It was a smile that could clearly be seen that was

made up, but it was fine. Because it wasn't even a video call. Making a smile was simply a matter of how she was feeling, because if she was feeling like dying, it was obvious that her voice would follow her expression.

“Hello?”

[ Kaya..... You, you fan?(fine) ]

The voice of her younger sister that can't even control her accent or pronunciation. That weird voice rather calmed her down. Her younger sister, Gemma, suffered from cerebral palsy. Her words, movements, and expression couldn't be natural. However, Kaya didn't hate nor judge her unnatural movements even once. If there was someone like that, she didn't even hesitate to stick to them like a crazy dog, bite them, and pour out curses. She was that kind of sister.

Kaya opened her mouth with a soft voice. If there was someone near her who knew her, they would get surprised by the gentleness and softness of her voice. “What's there to not be fine about? But what happened? Those jerk bastards didn't pick a fight with you again, right?”

[ Am fan. Bot, bot, Tuess..... Shi.....] (I'm fine. Bu, but, Tess..... She.....)

“I also know. Don't worry. There's nothing to make a problem of. Does mom know?”

[ Neu..... I din tel er. ] (No..... I didn't tell her.)

“Good. Don't tell mom. It's a promise?” Gemma hesitated for a moment but in the end, replied shortly ‘ung’(yeah). Kaya put on a bitter smile.

“You are having it hard because you don’t have your sister, right? I’m sorry. I will win quickly and return.”

[ Am fan withot Kaya. So don wowy. ] (I’m fine even without Kaya, so don’t worry.)

“Even if you tell me to, can I really do that? Even you are worrying about me right now. I’m fine, so don’t think about anything. Even if you do worry, there’s nothing that would change. Understand?”

Gemma didn’t reply. Kaya let out a sigh.

“It’s adding to the telephone fee. Let’s slowly end it. I will call you later. Okay?”

[ Ung..... Chiel ap. ] (Yeah..... Cheer up.)

“Yeah, I will.”

The call ended. The screen turned black, and she saw what she was typing before. Kaya let out a sigh and erased the comment. She had just told her to not worry, so she couldn’t make this bigger.

It was at that moment that a knocking sound was heard. A careful and soft sound. Even listening at the sound, she could guess the voice that would be heard after that.

“Can I go in?”

It was Jo Minjoon’s voice. Kaya hesitated for a moment and went

to the door. She said with a low and rough voice.

“I know that if you come in I will probably vent my anger on you. So don’t.”

“If you are angry you have to vent it. I will receive it.”

Kaya couldn’t say anything at his words. She didn’t want to vent her anger on him. She wouldn’t know if it was another person, but she didn’t want to do it to him because Jo Minjoon treated her better than anyone else. It was the first time that she had felt respected by someone.

So she acted more sensitively on his actions. Would he ignore her or would he see her as a spoiled kid like everyone else? However, Jo Minjoon didn’t think like that even once. It could be heard weirdly if you put it this way, but she felt like Jo Minjoon was looking at someone else when he looked at her. She didn’t hate it. Perhaps, he would be mistaking her, but even mistaking someone in a good way felt good.

So she hated herself that much for acting like a kid. She was different to what she usually said. Don’t ignore me because I couldn’t learn. Don’t ignore me because I’m poor. Even after talking like that, she was the one that did things that made you ignore her. It was to the point that even when she saw herself, she saw a dull fellow with an empty mind, but she was curious as to how Jo Minjoon could evaluate her so highly.

She couldn’t open this door. Because the moment she opened it, she wouldn’t know as to how low she would fall. She couldn’t

anymore. She didn't want to act like a kid in front of him anymore. That's how she thought.

She was already holding the door knob. She looked at her hands with confused eyes. No, You can't. Kaya opened her mouth. It was a voice so low it seemed like she was mumbling. So low to the point you wondered if it would be transmitted through the door.

“If you don't leave, I will get miserable. I'm spoiled. Right. I told you to not ignore me, but actually.....”

Kaya closed her mouth. Those words were really weak for her to say. She bit her lips and continued talking with a stifled voice.

“.....Perhaps, I'm the one that's ignoring myself the most. That's why, help me so I don't feel more miserable.

Each and every word was heavy. What kind of face would he be making right now? What would he be thinking about? She's a spoiled girl with many problems? Kaya herself couldn't know.

“Go. I'm begging you.”

No reply came back. Kaya was just standing in front of the door. How many minutes would have passed? One minute. Five minutes. Perhaps, it would even be 10 or more minutes. Kaya opened the door after hesitating.

But there was no one there. At that moment, she felt a corner of

her heart itch. Even after telling him to leave with her own mouth, could she have been expecting something? She felt pitiful.

It was at that moment when Kaya bit her lips and turned back. Something caught her attention. Next to the door, a small plate was placed. It was a sandwich. Kaya looked at that the sandwich absentmindedly for a long while. How much time passed? She slowly bent down and picked up the dish. After laying down on the bed, she slowly took a bite.

“.....Idiot.”

She wrote on the comments.

# Chapter 85: The Pig And The Fire (1)

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The controversy about Kaya overheated. There were no sites that were even a little bit related to Grand Chef that didn't talk about Kaya's past.

There weren't many people that thought that Tess Gilly had mitomania. She even uploaded an image of her injury on her chin and said that it was Kaya's doing. They couldn't think that she was lying when she had even shown her face in a picture.

The netizens got divided in two. Some doubted that there was some lie and exaggeration in Tess Gilly's argument, and there were those that heated things up by cursing Kaya with the exposed facts. The fact that they were classmates and their relationship wasn't good was simple. Also, it was true that the scar on Tess Gilly's chin was done by Kaya. Many anonymous people claimed that they were indeed 'schoolmates', but the problem was that they couldn't be verified if they were real or not.

Hilary Hahn : There's no need to think about it in depth. Although it is true that she did give her a scar in her face, I think that it isn't right to criticize her before knowing what happened before that.

└ LGE : What should have happened for me to assent as to her having a scar? Whatever happened, I think that it can't be permitted.

└ Erika Vlados : @LGE That's what's she saying, that permitting it or not beforehand is a stupid thing to do. In the first place, if Kaya did something that bad, she would have gone to a reformatory. But she didn't.

It was this way. To say that they can be sure of it, the information was too scarce. But of course, there were some people that were sure with that little information, but those kind of people only stained their name with ridicule and criticism.

“If time passes, then it will all be okay.”

Martin mumbled as if he was memorizing a chant. Robert frowned as if he didn't understand.

“Can't we just reveal the truth? Although it will all be covered and many people won't see it in a good way, if we tell everything as it is, there will be a lot more people that would understand it.”

“But if she doesn't say anything, although it will be a little uncomfortable, in the end it will all be forgotten. On top of all, there's no proper evidence to that 'truth' except the words that would come from Kaya herself. If we revealed that without any evidence, they would say that we were manipulating the media, and the public opinion may worsen. Trust me, this is the best path for Kaya and for the broadcast.”

Following the information they got from Kaya's mouth, the scar of Tess's chin was an accident from both sides. But the reason only Kaya got expelled, or rather, got disposed by dropping out of school was simple.

Grand Chef didn't announce anything official about this situation yet. Precisely speaking, they replied in the most typical way. ‘We are investigating the situation. There are a lot of



different points in what Tess Gilly said to what we know.' And they didn't mention any details because there was a need to check the reactions of the media a little more.

And the results were certainly not bad. Yesterday, the 10th episode that showed the dessert mission was broadcasted, and it gave the sensation that the incident of Kaya's middle school life got a little pushed back. But of course, people that liked to expose other's errors were drooling, but this much didn't cause a problem.

Martin massaged his neck. The more he thought of it, the more his head hurt. First, the only thing they could do now was wait. If the bubble shrank, it would end there. BUT if it grew larger, then they would have to pop it themselves. Whichever side it was, now wasn't the time to get some results.

"Let's slowly prepare for the mission. There weren't many fun factors in the dessert mission. But still, it was fortunate that Jo Minjoon could reproduce that jelly. But we can't depend on Jo Minjoon forever. This time, let's certainly catch the attention of the viewers."

".....Ugh, another one will get eliminated today too. Seeing that hurts my heart."

Martin smirked.

"Worry about yourself. You don't know when people are going to walk the road of elimination. Do you think that the seat of PD is eternal?"

“There’s only talk about you again.”

Anderson frowned and closed the window in his handphone. It was understandable. To replicate the recipe of a dish he ate once, after that scene, you wouldn’t think about any other person but Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon smirked and asked.

“Are you jealous?”

“It’s a little different to jealousy, because it’s normal to get a stomachache while looking at others doing well.”

“Just looking at you saying those things that calmly.....You are certainly similar to Kaya.”

“.....Stop it.”

It was an expression as if he really didn’t want to listen to it. Jo Minjoon laughed and raised his kochi. It wasn’t dakkochi or sheep kochi. The things that were skewered in the kochi was prosciutto, tomato, and bread smeared in olive oil. It was an Italian dish called bruschetta. It was a simple composition, but the moment it entered his mouth, the salty flavor of the prosciutto and the aroma of olive oil spread..... and the aroma of the perfectly roasted bread followed. He admired happily.

“For the flavor of bread to be this important.....”

“Bread is a basic in Europe cuisine, just like rice is for your country.”

“In my country, rather than eating bread like this.....how can I say it? Snack? We like it that.”

“I know. You also said that last time.”

“.....Did I?”

Jo Minjoon laughed embarrassedly and kept eating another bruschetta. This one didn't have toppings, but only bread with olive oil. The surprising thing was that even that was delicious. Well, with only one drop of sesame oil, the flavor got better, so he thought that he could take this with a similar feeling.

He slightly looked at Kaya. She was eating the cheesecake Sasha had made with a little tired face. She said that she didn't have appetite and that her stomach hurt, but she had made many things but couldn't even enjoy it. Jo Minjoon's mouth was filled with bitterness. Although he wasn't showing it, it could clearly be seen that he was having it hard.

It was unfortunate, but there was nothing he could do for her. Hugo looked Jo Minjoon's expression and carefully opened his mouth.

“Do you think Kaya's going to be fine?”

“There's no way she will. Look at how many ill comments there were. Kaya's still young. She's only 18.”

“.....Thinking about it, Kaya's the youngest participant among the surviving ones.”

Hugo looked at Kaya in a new light. Although she did childish

things, he felt that she didn't give a sensation of being old because of her make up. She also had skills. She was a possible winning candidate. It was difficult to treat her as a normal teen.

“Who's the oldest among us?”

“I wonder. Isn't it Sasha? Sasha should be around 28. Anderson is 22 and you are 21. How old was Chloe?”

“21. I wasn't aware of it, but all of the top candidates are young. I remember that there were at least one or two people in their thirties.”

“That means that we did that well.”

Hugo smirked with a confident face. It was at that moment that Robert approached them to the table. The faces of all of the participants froze. If it was something that the youngest PD had to come and find them, the reason was really simple. The words came out from Robert's mouth as they had expected.

“After two hours, the mission's going to start. Get ready.”

Robert just said that sentence and disappeared. Kaya that was looking at his back, frowned.

“It makes me lose my appetite.”

“Me too.”

Sasha replied with a sad voice and rested her chin on her hands. Chloe rolled her eyes as if she had fallen in her thoughts, and looked at Jo Minjoon.

“.....What do you think the mission is going to be? Minjoon, guess. You got it right last time too.”

“I wonder, I can’t seem to predict it today.”

“Do you have days which you can feel those things?”

“Isn’t everyone like that?”

He replied with an awkward face. Even if it flowed as it originally was meant to, his memories were a little cloudy. It seemed like recently, the judges tried to make the contents of the missions a little harder. And if the contents of the mission changed, his memories wouldn’t be of use. Chloe replied while smiling.

“It would be good if Chinese cuisine comes out as the theme.”

“.....If it does, everyone will be in a disadvantage except for you.”

“You can at least think positively.”

Chloe pouted. Jo Minjoon smirked. If other people said this, the feeling would be different. But since it was Chloe, who took care of others better than anyone, that said those words, she didn’t feel hateful at all.

However, aside from being hateful or not, Chloe’s wish realizing didn’t happen. The afternoon of that day, the theme the judges announced wasn’t related to a country.

“There will be two themes in this mission. And the first one is fire.”

Emily lowered her voice as if she was trying to make the atmosphere heavy. Since she was forcing it, it didn't feel heavy at all, but could it be because of the position of judge? They even got nervous and their hair raised even with her breath. The people just looked at Emily. Emily slowly enjoying their gazes, and continued talking in a slow voice.

“They said that fire gave a sense of civilization to humankind. It made them know of cooking, as well as the various cooking methods they could do. Roasting, poaching, simmering, sautéing, steaming, broiling, grilling... it is difficult to count every one of them. You have to cook one ingredient in three different methods, and that ingredient is...”

Emily paused for a moment. No, that wasn't pausing. Gulp. Emily gulped, and after laughing embarrassedly, she continued talking.

“Even trying to talk makes me drool. The ingredient is pork. It's good to roast the exterior yellowy, and it's also good to coat it in flour and fry it. Putting it in stew and saving the flavor is also a good choice. Whatever side it is, I hope you cook your best.”

Alan continued to say after Emily with a calm voice.

“The time you can use to cook is exactly 2 hours. We will give you 30 minutes from now on to think on the recipe, so think about what you will cook in that time.”

30 minutes. When they were thinking that 30 minutes to think about three different recipes was not that long of a time, Joseph opened his mouth.

“If the three dishes you present are harmonious, we can give you extra points. However, the most important thing is the quality of the food that’s on top of the plate. I will pray for you to make your best on cooking. Think of your recipe. We will give you exactly 30 minutes from now on.”

Jo Minjoon rolled his head. 2 hours and three dishes. Although it had all of the body parts of the pig, it wasn’t by Korean standards but in American standards.

Taking into account those points, he had many options to choose. There were so many it made him wonder as to what he could cook. So if they gave him a wide variety of options, the recipe he could use was also wide. Because from the time he was together with the other participants, the cooking methods and the recipes he got to know from them were many. If he combined all of that, he thought that he would be able to get a good result.

Jo Minjoon closed his eyes. Inside his eyes, many recipe windows appeared and disappeared. Although he wouldn’t have noticed, it was a really fast speed. Two recipes appeared and disappeared in a second, so compared to the normal people, his conceptualization skills were 10 times faster. But of course, there were many recipes he had copied from them.....

When he opened his eyes, only 5 minutes had passed. Jo Minjoon slowly organized the recipes in his head. The first thing was a

Hong Kong style dongpo pork. the cooking method for this wasn't one or two. He could boil, fry it, and slice it to boil it down to a sauce. The second one was fried meatballs and smoked paprika with balsamic sauce. The last one was roasting pork rib in a barbecue style. And the composition score was 6.....

Jo Minjoon laughed. At least for the recipe composition, compared to the first time he entered the competition and now, the level had clearly changed. The estimated cooking score was all the same.

8 points.



## Chapter 86: The Pig And The Fire (2)

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Actually thinking up of an 8-point recipe wasn't such a surprising thing now because there were only two restrictions on the recipe: use pork and use fire. Actually, he thought that there was no pork recipe that didn't use fire, so in the end he only had to think of a recipe related to cooking pork.

And while he was in Grand Chef's house, he had tried more than ten or twenty dishes related to pork. They were chefs that came from all over the country. Even if they were amateurs, there wasn't a thing or two that he couldn't gain from them. That information was piled up in his head, so it would be more strange if he couldn't think of an 8-point recipe.

However, it didn't just end on thinking of an 8-point recipe. You could know just by listening that it was a 10 points recipe. Because it would end when you heard that explanation of another person. However, it was a different story if you talked about bringing the 100% of the flavor of that recipe. Three different dishes in two hours. If he didn't want to make a mistake, he had to meticulously think the cooking process.

He even had to set the completion time for the three dishes to be the same. It wasn't that hard of a condition. For pork galbi, he had to make the sauce beforehand and simmer it in it, and for meat ball, it didn't need too much of cooking time. So the dish that inevitably needed more time would be dongpo pork.

“.....Did you already think of it?”

Kaya was frowning and crossing her fingers, and then she asked while glancing at him. Jo Minjoon replied with a relaxed face.

“Well, it’s not that hard to think about, right?”

“.....Disgusting.”

Kaya glared at her and crossed her fingers again. He talked to her again.

“You can’t think of a recipe?”

“No, I thought of many, but I don’t know what to use.”

“The two over there, don’t talk.”

Emily looked at the two of them, and sent a fierce look. Kaya pouted and crossed her fingers again. It wasn’t that she was particularly slow. He could see that the other participants were not yet done designing a recipe.

‘Was I this fast.....?’

At first, he didn’t think that he was this much. But perhaps, it could be a problem of conviction. The others don’t know if a recipe would turn out to be good or not even if it was good because they didn’t have the system that scored the recipe. However, Jo Minjoon didn’t need to think about that. Because of that, he could be calm to the point that the judges sent preoccupied sights.

“Minjoon. Did you already finish the designing?”

“Yes.”

“Think for a bit more. The recipe you thought of being perfect can actually bring you a completely different result. Just like there are dishes with horrible recipes, but can give a heaven’s flavor.”

“Yes, I am thinking.”

Jo Minjoon replied while laughing calmly. Alan opened his mouth feeling somewhat uncomfortable, but he closed it again. Thinking about it, there was almost no time that Jo Minjoon’s recipe was a mess. And it didn’t seem like it will be a mess just because it was today.

“.....I will believe you.”

In the end, the only thing Alan could say was that much. Jo Minjoon slowly loosened his fingers. For the cooking score to be high meant that the difficulty was also high. If he acted stupidly for even a minute, there was a high chance that he could miss the timing to give it flavor.

There was nothing to say about the dongpo pork and the meatballs that had to be fried, and the pork galbi was also a problem. Because he was planning to roast the pork galbi in direct fire. Although the difficulty was lower compared to Kaya’s grilled eel, he wasn’t as skilled as Kaya. So it was a mission which he had to concentrate more than anytime else.

Time flowed. Joseph was slowly looking at the clock, and announced the start of the mission with a clear voice.

“Start!”

The participants went to the pantry. The first thing Jo Minjoon took was pork meat. Samgyeopsal to use in the dongpo pork, shoulder meat to be put in the meat ball, and the ribs to be used in pork galbi. Aside from that, he had to take dry red wine, onions, potatoes, herbs, etc. Just as there were many ingredients because it was three dishes, Jo Minjoon didn't use much time in picking the ingredients.

‘Freshness 73%, 81%, 91%.....Ah, it's here. 97%. But the quality is middle.’

It was different even in choosing potatoes. Others had to touch it and look at the colour and the shape, but Jo Minjoon just had to look at the system's window once to get the answer. There was already a difference from there. It was a speed so fast that not even Anderson who had received special education since small, or Kaya who grew up in the market and saw many ingredients without rest could compare to. Actually, when their baskets were still half-filled, Jo Minjoon was already preparing to cook in front of the countertop.

The judges approached him and looked at the ingredients, and couldn't hide the surprise. Joseph looked at the potatoes and the onions and opened his mouth.

“Sometimes, I simply thought that you had a good sense, but you really pick ingredients well. The ingredients you picked are all of the best quality. They are fresh and grew well. Do you have some kind of know-how?”

“It’s not to the point of having a know-how, I just have good eyes.”

“.....Those are some envious eyes. I think that it would be difficult to pick the ingredients as fast as you.”

Just like the person that said those words was Joseph, it was a compliment more certain than anything else. Jo Minjoon smiled and put three pots on fire. The first pot had onions, green onions, ginger, garlic, salt, cinnamon, and refined rice wine to boil the samgyeopsal. The second pot had sweet pumpkin, onions, carrots, and scallions for the vegetable gravy for the meatballs. The remaining one had canola oil to fry the samgyeopsal. The characteristic of Hong Kong style dongpo pork is that you have to fry samgyeopsal before boiling it.

The first thing Jo Minjoon handled was the pork ribs. Since the meat and the bone stuck with each other, separating them so the meat won’t go bad was also an ability. Jo Minjoon rolled the 5mm samgyeopsal. It could be seen as something particularly not difficult, but it was a quite a difficult work because you had to balance all of the sides of the meat equally.

This knife process was what determined the score of pork ribs. If you didn’t do this step properly, one side would get undercooked and the other overcooked. Because of that, Jo Minjoon’s eyes, which didn’t even have double eyelids, became sharper and more detail-oriented than usual.

He sliced the rib meat calmly but quickly. It wasn’t that he put strength in the tip of his knife, rather, it was like sharing skinship with your partner and rubbing the meat with soft hands. Every

time he did that, the meat got sliced easily. But of course, there was no person that didn't know that that process actually needed an outstanding amount of concentration.

‘He really grew a lot.’

Joseph thought while slowly looking at Jo Minjoon's knife. Only two months had passed since the elimination rounds. However, in that time, Jo Minjoon was slowly filling the lacking points. No, rather than saying slowly, his speed was certainly fast.

‘He certainly has talent.’

Jo Minjoon couldn't look at himself because the system covered his eyes, but looking from the others point of view, Jo Minjoon was a chef that had plenty of talent. The knife wasn't something that ended simply by moving it. You had to understand the ingredient, and feel it. It was a vague expression, but it could only be expressed that way.

And Joseph could see that. Jo Minjoon's comprehension towards cooking raised so much it couldn't even be compared to two months ago. That was clearly felt from the recipe, from the knife, and in the cooking order. But of course, a situation is just a situation. Good chefs stimulated him from his side, and he had to clash with them at least once a week in the missions. If he didn't grow in that situation, that would be rather strange. However, taking that into account, Jo Minjoon's rate of growth was really fast.

It was difficult to call him a genius. That kind of word was more suited to the likes of Kaya, and basically, Joseph didn't like to call a chef a genius. Because he felt that the effort he had poured all his life betrayed him. However, talent could exist in whatever theme, and Jo Minjoon was one of the person he had seen with the best talent. It was like that even without taking into account the absolute sense of taste.

He had already heard through Alan that Emily proposed him to walk the road of an epicurean. Joseph thought that it was a really horrible offer. Jo Minjoon was probably a chef that would remain in the history of cooking. So if he ended his life by evaluating the dishes of others, there would be nothing more meaningless than that.

Even while Joseph was sending him that fierce sight, Jo Minjoon didn't notice at all. He rested the pork in a sauce made by mixing ginger, chopped garlic, barbecue sauce, soy sauce, red wine, sugar, and lemon juice.

After that, it was the turn to fry the samgyeopsal. After frying it until only the exterior got seared and keeping the juice, you boiled that and steamed it after wrapping it along with the dongpo pork sauce. And that's how you completed the Hong Kong style dongpo pork. Jo Minjoon put the dongpo pork in the starting-to-boil oil, and immediately started to handle the pork meat that was going to be used in the meatball.

Shoulder meat. The fiber of this part was rough and the muscles were tough, and it wasn't a part that had good texture. You normally boiled it for long or sliced it thinly to use it as pork chop.

So of course, this part wasn't good to be used as meat ball because it was better to use a part that had the less amount of fat possible.

If you weren't skilled in handling meat, that process would be so hard it could take you many minutes. Some would think that you only had to mince it and slice it, but just because you struck the knife, the fiber wouldn't be cut that easily. If you didn't take into account the strength and angle, as well as the texture of the meat, it was a process that could only take longer.

However, Jo Minjoon's hands were fast. When the samgyeopsal got cooked to the point he wanted, the minced meat was already mixed with dill. The amount of the shoulder meat wasn't much, but even so, having finished the meat dough in the short time the samgyeopsal was getting seared was a really excellent thing. Jo Minjoon first put the samgyeopsal in a pot with boiling water. Then, the judges approached Jo Minjoon's countertop and opened their mouths.

“Minjoon, there's not even half the time now. Do you think you will be able to finish it?”

“Yes. It's just like I have calculated.”

“Before I saw that you fried dongpo pork and boiled it..... Will you be able to save the rough texture of the dongo pork that way?”

“I'm planning to cook it in a Hong Kong style. I'm not planning to make the exterior hard and the interior soft, but i'm planning to also make the exterior soft.”

“.....Hong Kong style dongpo pork. Good. Do well.”

The moment the judges were there, Jo Minjoon didn't even look



at them while talking to them. It meant that he was that much concentrated, and each and every time made him nervous. But it was fun. This intense moment that made you hold your breath, it gave you the feeling that you were properly conquering cooking.....

The corner of Jo Minjoon's mouth raised. In the oil that he used to fry garlic, chili, star anise, and ginger, he put green onion along with oyster sauce, kaoliang wine, aged soy sauce, and sugar. It was a sauce with a perfect ratio. He sliced the boiled samgyeopsal thinly, and put the sliced green onions between that. After that, he poured the sauce, rolled it in a wrap, and then he put it in the steamer.

There was a little more than 40 minutes left. He placed a paprika on top of the fire, After that, he mixed bread powder and cream to the minced meat dough, and sprinkled salt and pepper. Now that he made that dough round, the feeling was different as before. Was it because he had made a lot of doughs while practicing bakery? Giving it shape now was much easier than compared to when he made the catfish meatballs.

‘.....Was it this easy?’

It was to the point he questioned that. However there was no time to ponder that question. Jo Minjoon spread oil in the frying pan, and carefully fried the meatballs. When the exterior got seared and got a dense brown color, it was the time for the vegetable gravy that was boiling until now to appear. Jo Minjoon poured the vegetable gravy in the frying pan and covered it with a lid, and then he took the breath he was holding.

After that, the next step was simple. He peeled off the burn part of the paprika, and after slicing it longly, he placed it on a plate. When the vegetable gravy got burn a bit, he poured red wine to raise the flames and slightly flambé it, and then he placed the completed meatballs on top of the paprika one by one.

The sauce was simple. After turning off the fire that was used to cook the meatballs in the frying pan, he poured sugar, wine, balsamic, and vinegar and boiled it down with the remaining heat. When he sprinkled that on the meatballs with a spoon, it was the end. And the score.....

‘8 points.’

A faint smile appeared in Jo Minjoon’s face. It was a difficult process, but now that the results turned out as he expected to, he felt better. Making an 8-point dish without being troubled by it at all also made him happy.

Jo Minjoon took some time to rest. If he wanted to get the best flavor, it was better to complete the pork galbi right before the evaluation. When there was about 10 minutes left, Jo Minjoon took out the dongpo pork from the steamer and did the plating. And the score of the dongpo pork was also as he expected it. A smile seemed to appear in Jo Minjoon’s mouth, but soon, it became stiff as if he got nervous again.

The remaining thing was only the pork galbi. It was unexpectedly the most simple and hardest menu. The other dishes were only

difficult due to the process, but for the pork galbi, if you were even a bit careless, you could not get a good result. Depending on whether he could get 8 points in this dish or not would show whether he had talent or not.

Jo Minjoon placed the pork galbi in the grill. Direct fire. It was one of the most difficult cooking methods related to fire. If you cooked it with charcoal or straw fire in a low heat, you wouldn't need to think that it was difficult at all. But cooking it with a high fire and not burning the sauce and cooking the meat wasn't an easy thing to do. And if he also had to keep the juices, how difficult would that be?

Of course, his situation was a bit better compared to the grilled eel Kaya made. Because pork was a less sensitive ingredient compared to fish. But.....

The fire on the burner raised in a blue colour, and sometimes in a reddish colour. Jo Minjoon bit his lips. He was so nervous to the point that sweat accumulated in his palms. If he failed this dish, even if the other dishes were good, there would be no meaning. However, it was a challenge he had to beat.

The fire looked alive. He wasn't the type to express such things in words, but the fire looked alive. The fire followed the juices and sauce, and every time it happened, Jo Minjoon couldn't blink and had to move the grill. The smell of the grilled meat was followed by a dense smoke. He wanted to cough, but held it down.

There were two things that made him persevere. The aroma of the sauce and the meat that got heated, and the shape of it being

cooked without even a trace of being burnt. Just like a woman giving birth, Jo Minjoon beat that hardship. The smoke, the heat, and the fear.

And at the end of that fear, the result that came after he lifted the grill was simple.

[You perfectly roasted the pork galbi, just like the recipe, without any mistakes.]

[By combining concentration, ability, experience, and feeling, etc. your cooking level has changed!]

[Your cooking level has increased!]

# Chapter 87: The Pig And The Fire (3)

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[Jo Minjoon]

Cooking level: 7

Baking level: 5

Tasting level: 8

Decorations level: 5

Level 7. Had this number ever feel this lovely? It was a number that made him more happy than the 8 points that appeared next to the pork galbi. Now, he was on the same side as Anderson, Kaya, and Chloe. But of course, even if he was on the same level, there would still be some differences..... But even so, he thought that he had finally been able to catch up to their backs to some point.

Jo Minjoon looked at the number that was floating in the air with affection. If there was a problem, it would be Kaya that was behind the floating window he was looking at. She, who sensed his fierce sight, slightly turned. After she saw Jo Minjoon's eyes, she frowned and turned back again.

‘What is it? Why was he looking at me like that?’

She did feel burdened, but she was too busy to mind that. It was the same for Jo Minjoon. The level had raised, but he still had to finish the plating.

He didn't place a big amount on purpose, but he wasn't planning on imitating french dishes, showing the white plate. Only, if he

placed abundant food, there was a high possibility that they would feel burdened. 3 pork dishes by each participant. They were going to at least eat 21 pork dishes. Even if they made it deliciously, if the amount was much, there would be a high possibility that they would get sick of it from the start.

Tasting started by imagining the flavor before putting the food in your mouth. And if that was the case, there was a need to bring up the flavor they would imagine to the utmost. For the first time, he had made all of the dishes to be 8 points, and those were the last dishes he had made with cooking level 6. It was a meaningful moment, so he wanted to show that perfectly.

When he was placing the bite-size meat at the middle of each plate, there wasn't even a minute left. Jo Minjoon licked his dry lips and looked at the judges. Alan, who was glancing at the clock, yelled with a hard voice.

“Time's up! Take your hands off!”

The evaluation started. Jo Minjoon slowly looked at the other participants. There were only two person that got 8 points in all of their dishes: Kaya and Anderson. In the case of Chloe, she had two 8-point dishes, but the remaining one was 7 points.

The first one to get evaluated was Ivanna. Her dishes were all 7 points. It was a fine score. Since the participants of this season were all high leveled, she couldn't show her outstanding skills. But if Ivanna had participated in the previous season, she would have been a participant that gave much more impression than right now. Aside of her cute face, she had the qualifications and skills,

because it wasn't easy for an amateur to make a 7-point dish.

The judges also reviewed her dishes taking that into account. Of course, they couldn't tell if it was 7 or 8 points, but they could perfectly feel the level of that dish. Alan thought inwardly.

‘To feel regret in this kind of dish..... This season will certainly remain in history.’

Probably, from now on, there wouldn't be as many skilled participants as in the third season. In the first place, the story ended on the point that a participant had an absolute sense of taste.

It wasn't that they reviewed Ivanna's dishes in any special way, but even so the critic ended with quite good comments. Those were dishes that had stability. If you weren't a special epicurean, most of the people that tried Ivanna's dishes would be happy after trying it.

Sasha and Hugo weren't that different. They had dishes that were 6 and 7 points. Although it wasn't bad, those were dishes that lacked a bit to pass the evaluation. The judges had to crunch their heads thinking. It would be more comfortable if someone made a big mistake, since it would be difficult to eliminate one of them. In the end, they could only evaluate it subjectively.

“Minjoon, bring your dishes.”

But first, evaluating the remaining people came first. Alan looked at Jo Minjoon's dishes with expectant eyes. Since when could it be? He started to enjoy it more rather than evaluating it. The growth of this young participant could be seen with his eyes, and his growth was felt more clearly on his tongue.

“Is there an order to eat it?”

“I recommend you eating the meatball first because it's the less stimulative flavor among the three.”

“Less stimulative.....”

Joseph said and brought a meatball in his mouth. The soft smoked paprika and the meatball that was covered in wine sauce was chewed in his mouth. In the paprika, an unexpected crunchiness remained, and along with that flavor, the rough but soft meatball stimulated his tongue and the ceiling of his mouth.

The flavor of the wine sauce that was mixed with balsamic vinegar and boiled down was quite normal. However, it didn't mean that the flavor lost color because you couldn't criticize a barbecue sauce for having the same flavor as barbecue sauce.

“You made this wine sauce to have a flavor that people just like it. It's not simply sweet, but it had the acidity and sweetness that just suit with the meatball. On top of that, the special flavor of the dry wine..... Where did you learn this? This information would be difficult to find in the interne..... Ah, right. You could read the recipe.”

Alan asked with a face full of questions, and nodded after he had



understood. He knew the recipe of the things he ate. It was a really unrealistic thing to be conscious of that all the time.

He wouldn't even need a teacher. Because just by going to a famous restaurant and eating their food, he would be able to obtain all of the information of that chef. Everytime he mastered a recipe that chefs would normally try to hide, he would master an ability that's way beyond his age.

His fork reached to the next dish. It was the dongpo pork this time. The meat of the pork that couldn't even be compared to normal dongpo pork was chewed, and the juice that was mixed with the sauce slowly wettened his tongue. On top of the flavor of the vegetables fried on chinese oil, the dense aroma of the kaoliang wine remained inside that sauce. He really felt like he was eating a luxurious dongpo pork in a good Chinese restaurant. It was a dish that you wouldn't believe that it was made in just two hours and has this much effort and dedication.

Emily opened her mouth with an admiring face just like a pure girl.

“It's remarkable to get this flavor in just two hours. I thought that time was for dongpo pork.....”

“Thank you.”

“I am the one that should be thankful after eating this dish. Will you be able to eat this kind of thing for free?”

Emily talked like that and smiled. At times, she felt like a fox, but at least when she evaluated a dish, she showed a pure attitude of a

kid. And that was also the reason Jo Minjoon couldn't hate her.

‘It would be good if you stopped telling me to become an epicurean.’

Jo Minjoon thought like that and smiled bitterly. It was now the turn of the last dish. Pork galbi. The judges put on a more serious face. Joseph opened his mouth.

“You should know this, but among the dishes you have cooked today, this pork galbi is the most important one. Because it will directly show the ability you have. And.....”

Joseph looked at the shape of the pork galbi and slowly opened his eyes.

“Looking at the exterior, it doesn't look like it has any flaws. The sauce is well sipped in it, and it isn't burnt. The meat is seared with a really good colour. To not burn it, it's the simplest but the most difficult thing. It's accompanied with the sauce, and if it's grilled, then all the more so.”

Joseph talked like that and put a pork galbi in his mouth. A sauce made by mixing barbecue sauce and soy sauce. If you made a mistake, it could end up to be excessively salty, but the wine, vinegar, and lemon juice was making that weight to be light. And it wasn't just pouring the sauce on top of it, but after resting the meat, he cooked it with the sauce that was on the meat.

It could be felt with that bite that Jo Minjoon had grown. A small difference he was missing, it was a dish that was difficult to make if you didn't feel the moment the fire touched the meat. It wasn't that the flavor was more outstanding than the meatball or the dongpo pork. They couldn't feel that much of a difference in the flavor or in the completion. However, if you were someone that cooked, you could only feel that difference. The effort and skills the pork galbi contained wasn't normal. Alan opened his mouth.

“.....I will honestly speak. I'm sorry, Minjoon. Previously, I didn't see your probabilities of winning to be that high. However, after eating your dishes today, I am starting to think differently. Perhaps, you may do so. Yes, you will be able to win.”

It was a serious voice. Jo Minjoon smiled faintly. He thought that it may become awkward with whatever he said. But fortunately, Emily lent him her rescuing hand.

“Today, all of you had presented dishes that had nothing to call out on. And especially, it seems that from what Minjoon had shown us until now, it is the best. No, actually, every time he does a mission I get a feeling that he's growing. I will also be expecting that for the next mission.”

It meant that he had passed. Jo Minjoon smiled and slightly bent.

The evaluations of Chloe, Anderson, and Kaya's obviously didn't fall that much compared to Jo Minjoon's. They made dishes such as hamburger, shredded five-spice marinated pork, ravioli, etc. and it couldn't be seen that it fell for even a little. Obviously, the eliminated person could only appear from the remaining ones:

Ivanna, Sasha, and Hugo.

‘They wouldn’t eliminate all of them.’

Aside of doing the reviving phase or not, it became time to get some control on how many got eliminated. At least for the broadcasting material, they just had to do so.

‘Then, it’s a matter of who they eliminate.....’

Jo Minjoon slowly looked at the three of them. First, it didn’t seem to be Ivanna because her dishes were all 7 points. However, in the case of Hugo and Sasha, they made two 7 points dishes and one 6 points. Bust guessing who will be eliminated based on the score was hard.

“Sasha, Ivanna, Hugo. Come to the front.”

The three of them walked with nervous faces. They had also guessed that they weren’t the higher ranked ones, but the lower ranked. Joseph looked at them with a little exhausted face.

“I believe that you know the reason as to why we have called you.”

“.....Are we all going to be eliminated?”

“We won’t do that. Only one person. Actually, there wasn’t that much of a difference in cooking. They were all fairly good. But this place is one that you can’t survive with it just being fairly good. There are tens of participants, and if some of them made a horrible

dish it wouldn't matter. However, now isn't it. Better than the others. It's not enough with that much skill. Because there's no one that's sloppy among the ones that survived until now."

At Joseph's words, the three couldn't reply anything. Because they knew better than them that their dishes weren't that outstanding. Joseph opened his mouth, but closed it as if it was hard to say it. But Emily seemed to want to help her, and instead, raised her voice.

"That's why we evaluated you. Not only for thee dishes, but we will save the one who we are expecting their food from now on. Sasha!"

Emily paused for a moment. And then, asked with a low voice.

"Why do you think I called your name?"

".....Ah, please. My heart seems to shrink."

"I'm sorry. With the meaning of apologizing, I will tell you something good. You have survived. From what we have seen of you until now, we reached a conclusion that we want to give you more opportunities. Go back to your countertop."

"Thank you....."

Sasha replied with a shaking voice, and after wiping off the tears that were in her eyes, she returned to her place. The remaining ones were two. Ivanna gulped and clenched her fists. She remembered Joanne.

‘I said that I was going to win instead of Joanne.’

But reality was like this. At that moment, she didn’t know where her ambition had gone, and if it was even in her. Everytime time she made eye contact with the judges, her heart beat, and she even started to have hiccups. Alan looked at Ivanna for a moment and opened his mouth.

“Honestly speaking, the one that’s better up among the three is you, Ivanna.”

“Thank you.”

“.....But, that’s all. Fairly good. Until now, you have never showed us something that breaks that concept. It meant that you have never showed us something that’s only yours, something that will stay in our memories. In the other side, Hugo had his ossobuco, and he had also showed a leadership that could lead others well. Ivanna, will we be able to pour our expectations on you?”

Ivanna bit her lips. Her face that was more pale than usual, was shaking. However, she didn’t have anything to reply back. Just like Alan had said, she had never showed something good of her. She had merely survived until now. And it was lacking with just that. But.

“.....Yes. Be expecting.”

“Looking what?”

“I,I..... Only know how to cook well. And just like chef has said, I’m just fairly good. But, it isn’t that I gave up on growing. I want to show you that I can get better. Give me a chance.”

Alan didn't reply anything. Instead, he looked at Hugo. And asked with a low voice.

“Hugo, what do you think? Do you think that we should give that opportunity to Ivanna?”

At that moment, Hugo only smacked his lips. He didn't know what he should reply. If he gave her that chance, he had to get eliminated. But also telling him not to give it to her felt bad. He asked.

“.....Is my opinion important?”

“I wonder. I don't know. I'm just curious about what you think.”

“I'm thankful that you are thinking good of me. But I'm still lacking. Perhaps, if Ivanna's dish was better than mine, I think that it would be right to evaluate it just with her dish instead of the future and expectations.”

“Then, you will be the one to get eliminated?”

“.....To get greedy beyond my abilities, that would only be mean.”

At his words, Alan's corner of his mouth raised. He looked at Hugo with warm eyes and asked.

“One thing is certain. That there's Italian blood flowing in you just like me. It was a wonderful speech. And just as that speech, I hope that you would be able accept my next words.”

Silence flowed from a moment, and what ended that was a blunt declaration.

“Hugo, you have been eliminated. Return your badge and leave the Grand Chef’s house.”



# Chapter 88: The Weight Of A Restaurant (1)

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“47, 48, 49, 50..... Okay. Get up, Chloe.”

“.....Whew, difficult.”

Chloe was letting out rough breaths while lying on the mat. Jo Minjoon, who was holding her legs, released his hands and asked.

“Isn’t it difficult to train everyday? People who exercised also do it in intervals. You will get injured.”

“But instead, I don’t do that much. And there aren’t that many training machines here.....”

Chloe looked around the gym with regretful eyes. The gym that was made not only for the participants, but also for the staff, wasn’t on the good side. Jo Minjoon looked at Anderson that was doing squats next to them. Anderson had a body that was unexpectedly built up. It was certainly different compared to him.

“.....Should I also do some exercise?”

“You came here to do that, didn’t you?”

“Rather than coming to do exercise, I came to get some motivation.”

“You don’t get motivation from others, but you have to get motivated yourself. ‘I have to do some exercise.....’ You just mumble these words by yourself and your body is still the same? And your will is also the same.”

“Fine. Then, should I start to.....”

It was at that moment that he was going to end the word ‘today’ that his phone rang. His handphone rang. Jo Minjoon raised his hand to Chloe for a moment and got outside the gym. The name that popped up the screen was ‘Jessie Dean’. It was a name he hadn’t seen for a while, so Jo Minjoon put on a welcoming smile.

“It’s been a while since you called. What happened?”

[ Just so. I was bored and I don’t have anything to do. ]

“But shouldn’t you be at school right now? Ah, New York is one hour behind.”

The conversation continued this way by catching up. She was still making jelly, how big was Grand Chef’s house. And of course, a question that couldn’t be out appeared.

[ Aren’t the both of you really dating? ]

“I told you that we aren’t.”

At the voice that was filled with curiousness, Jo Minjoon replied bluntly. Jessie groaned as if she didn’t believe him. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and changed subjects. He was certainly tired of this theme. Because it wasn’t only Jessie, but also his family and friends asked him about Kaya when they called.

“How is Mr. Lucas doing?”

[ Well, it seems like he was starting a new company..... He doesn’t tell those things to me much. But he’s doing well.]

“That’s good.”

More than anything else, Jessie's voice really brightened up. And with just that, he didn't have anything in particular to worry about. Jessie asked him something that she was concerned of.

[ But, that Lotus girl..... There were bad rumours in the internet. It's not true, right? ]

"By all means, it's not. People always tend to think that they were the victims. Tess Gilly, so..... You can look at it as the same kind."

[ Well, you should see people well. ]

"Also tell it to the people around you. Kaya, she's not that kind of person."

[ .....That isn't so difficult. But it seems like you really take care of her? ]

Jessie asked as if she was suspicious. Jo Minjoon replied with a voice he was sick of.

"Let's end this. I have to exercise."

[ Ah, I'm sorry. Don't cut. I'm bored. I'm bo.....! ]

Even after Jessie's eager voice, he couldn't pull back his already extended finger. It was at that moment when the call ended and the screen was turning black. He heard a familiar voice.

"It seems like you were talking about me."

"Ah! What a surprise..... Go making a sign."

As he turned back to look at the owner of that voice, he saw Kaya pointing at her feet instead of replying. She was wearing high heels. Her feet moved. Clap clap. It was too clear of a sound to say it was silent. Jo Minjoon scratched his chin with an embarrassed face.

“I can’t listen well when I’m on a call.”

“I think that you are just deaf. So what? Wasn’t that about me?”

“If someone calls me they usually ask me about you. Aren’t you like that?”

“.....There’s particularly no one that calls me. Excluding my sister and my mom.”

Kaya pouted and replied. He knew he was supposed to feel sad at those words, but when she said it with that face, he thought she looked cute. Jo Minjoon smirked.

“And your sister and mother don’t talk about me?”

“They do. They ask me why I keep a fool such as you next to me.”

“.....Really? They really said that?”

“And you also believe that?”

Kaya clicked her tongue and shook her head. Jo Minjoon frowned. When he played with his younger cousins, he tended to be the one that fell to these childish plays. He was like that when he was with Kaya. Although he didn’t know if that was good or bad.....

“I’m going to do some exercise. Leave.”

“You are really going to exercise? You didn’t until now. Why, because I teased you?”

“Do I look like a kid to you? Who will exercise just because someone makes fun of me?”

“There’s nothing wrong with being a kid, and it hasn’t been long since you stopped being a teen. How about you also stop acting like an adult?”

At that moment, he did get angry, but he didn’t want to get swept up in her phase. For her, it hasn’t been long since he stopped being a teen, but that wasn’t the case. Because originally, he had lived until his thirties. It was an age where he shouldn’t do childish things.

“It hasn’t been long until I came back from the army. My body isn’t that bad.”

“Army? You were a soldier?”

Kaya opened her eyes roundly. She looked like she had never imagined it, because he had never told anyone that he had gone to the army. Jo Minjoon slightly rolled his eyes.

“Yeah. And I also fired a gun and got training.”

There was no need to say that he was from the administrative part of the army. So Jo Minjoon made up those last words. Kaya rolled her eyes with a confused face as if she had got a shock at the unexpected reality and then she asked in a careful voice.

“Then you did it?”

“What?”

“That..... Ki..... no, if you shot a person.”

Even if she was trying not to show it, her big eyes were showing a light he had never seen before. And there was a lot of unnecessary hand gestures. Was it because of that? That even if he knew that it was childish, he wanted to tease her more. This man that was once 30 years old, replied with a really meaningful voice.

“Korea is a ceasefire country.”

Honestly speaking, she didn't know what he was talking about. Kaya was weak with words that were hitting around the bush. Was there no way that they wouldn't fire a gun because it was a ceasefire country, or precisely because it was such a country that there would be cases as that. Just listening to the weight of his voice, it seemed to be the latter case.

‘Is it difficult for him to reply?’

It was understandable for her to think like that. She was embarrassed to show that she didn't comprehend. Kaya opened her eyes clearly and said.

“I don't think about that in a bad way even if it did happen. I understand.”

“Thanks.”

Jo Minjoon smirked. Just what in the world was she thinking about. He wondered if she was thinking of Korea as a dangerous environment such as the Middle East. He didn't know when he should clear the misunderstanding, and when he was going to be hit by annoyed punches.

‘Let's worry about that later..... First, let's do some exercise.’

However, Jo Minjoon doing exercise that day didn't happen. Even before he grabbed a dumbbell, the staff approached and yelled.

“We are moving to the mission place. Everybody prepare and come to the garage!”

—

While they were moving in the bus, the main subject of the talk was obviously related to the mission. Sasha opened her mouth.

“It will be a restaurant, right? There are only such places to go when you go out.”

“There's also hotels. But the certain thing is that we are going to a kitchen, with whatever shape it has.”

“.....Will only one person get eliminated today too?”

“I don't know. Thinking about the numbers, I think that it should, and there may even be some unexpected turns and 2 people gets eliminated. Just don't think about getting eliminated. That's more comfortable.”

Anderson said with a cynical voice. Listening to Sasha's sigh, Jo Minjoon turned his sight to outside the window. How long has it been since he had gone out of Grand Chef's house? Recently, reporters gathered so much that they couldn't even get out. And as he could see the exterior like this, he felt that his stuffiness was getting relieved.

Right behind his seat, Kaya glanced at his back. She wondered if she had touched some hurting memories related to the army with just his simple appearance of looking outside the window.

‘.....How dangerous is it if it's in a ceasefire state?’

There was no way that she would have learnt about that, or have some interest in it. Kaya poked Chloe's side that was seated next to her. Chloe turned to look at her with a confused face.

“Why?”

“Shh. Get closer.”

Kaya said with a really low voice.

“Is Korea, I mean South Korea, still a dangerous country? And do they also fire guns?”

“I wonder. Not that I know. I even have some friends that travelled there. Well, I did see that people picked a fight with you through the news. But why?”

“No, it's nothing.”



“What is it? Making me curious. Are you really not going to tell me? If you are talking about Korea, is it not related to Minjoon?”

“Sh! I told you to be quiet!”

Kaya put on a fierce face and pressed Chloe’s lips with her thumb. Chloe raised her eyebrows and looked at Kaya’s face and finger alternating. Kaya lifted her finger and said.

“Act a little tactful, Chloe.”

“So what should I be tactful about?”

“.....You can’t tell this to anyone.”

Kaya looked at those around her with vigilant eyes. Jo Minjoon was still looking outside the window, and Anderson and Sasha were talking about the mission. Ivanna was asleep. There was no one who would listen to their conversation. Kaya opened her mouth.

“Minjoon said that he was a soldier.”

“I think that you must serve military service in Korea, so it’s obvious that he went to the army. What about it?”

“So if you were a soldier you have gone to war and such. There were also some uncles that went to the army, but each of them had it hard because of the memories of the army. Minjoon doesn’t show it but..... Isn’t he suffering by himself? You know, there are those symptoms. PT.....this and that.”

Chloe looked at Kaya with a strange face. Just what was this little lady imagining? However Kaya was still putting a face that was

entirely in her own world.

“Thinking about it, he will return to Korea again. I didn’t think much about it before, but isn’t this a dangerous thing? He would have to be helping in the humanitarian division. Should I tell Minjoon to apply for it now?”

“.....I think that you are having a big misunderstanding. Kaya. Korea is different to what you are imagining.”

“It’s a ceasefire country. He said that war can happen at any moment.”

“That’s right.....”

She didn’t know how to explain it. And in the first place, even she didn’t know much about Korea. The problem was elsewhere. It was that if she left it like this misunderstanding on her own and worrying by herself, she became quite cute. However she wasn’t confident on being able to handle Kaya’s attitude after she got to know the truth and after she had feigned innocence.

“Kaya, actually.....”

“We have arrived!”

“So they say. Let’s talk about this another time.”

However, Chloe’s determination got cut by the staff’s yell. ‘Well, now is not the only time.’ Chloe thought like that and turned her head. The thing she saw outside the window was a restaurant. A restaurant that was half on water, and the other half was on the shore. Because most of it was built with white trees, it had quite a romantic feeling in it.

If anyone saw it they would have admired it, and Kaya wasn't an exception. She, who got off the bus, forgot even about Jo Minjoon having gone to the army and simply expressed words of admiration. However the voice that was heard after that, and the mic that appeared before her suddenly crumbled her admiration.

“It's Jessica Prada from Daily Street. We received an accusation that you bullied your schoolmate with malice, was that true?”

## Chapter 89: The Weight Of A Restaurant (2)

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Kaya's face froze. Behind her shaking eyes, nobody could tell how she was feeling right now. The heart, beating faster than usual, and being chasen by rage or fear, nobody could know.

It was difficult to breath. Her clenched fists trembled, and a rough breath got out from between her lips. Behind her front hair, Kaya's fierce eyes shone. Jessica naturally raised her camera to capture that expression. Martin quickly interfered and covered the lens. Jessica looked at Martin with a neutral face.

“Oh, it's been a while. Martin?”

“.....Why are you here? No, I will change the question. How did you know and come here?”

“Ey, a reporter shouldn't reveal the source of the information.”

“I wonder. Aside from that, I think that taking pictures without permission is also not the proper method.”

“Ey, why are you acting like this. Between us...”

A shiny smile appeared just like her blond hair. If you were a man, you couldn't help but get moved by that smile, but Martin didn't. He knew a lot of people that were deceived by that smile. It was a fake smile anyways, just like her hair was dyed blonde.

“I don't think that acting like this between us is weird. Fall back for now. We didn't request for an interview, and aren't planning to receive one. Or should I just leave a complaint to Daily Street?”

“Why are you acting that way? Don't make me scared. Do mice

in a warehouse escape because they get frightened a bit? They just have to get slightly full.”

“After they get full they will consider that warehouse to be their house. They breed and carve a mouse hole. Do I have to give my warehouse to a mere mouse?”

Martin’s eyes shone coldly. Jessica opened her eyes big and rolled them, and then shrugged her shoulders as if she could do nothing about it.

“I think that it will be hard to expect some benevolence from you. Fine, I will return for now. But remember, that the mouse is still hungry. Even if the owner of the house is scary, if it’s scary, in the end it will bite down the wall and eat all of the grains.”

“Then, the owner will plant some mouse traps.”

Martin replied with an annoyed voice. Jessica smiled brightly, didn’t reply, and turned back. Her sight was directed at Kaya for a moment, but soon changed to Jo Minjoon.

“Jo! I’m a fan. I’m cheering for you. Go all the way until you win.”

“Go quickly. Don’t you know that you are bothering with work?”

“Ah, I understand. I will go. I’m going. Ah, and miss Lotus, I’m sorry to have given you the mic from the start. Next time, I will ask with a calmer attitude.

It was at that moment when Kaya was going to raise her middle finger instead of replying. Jo Minjoon firmly grabbed her hands.

Kaya looked at him with reddened eyes. There was no need for special words. Jo Minjoon and Kaya. Both of them could guess with just the shake of the hand what the other was going to say.

“.....Let go. I calmed down.”

Kaya's voice was a lot calmer. Thinking about the wind that passed by just now, not getting dispersed would be stranger. Jo Minjoon slowly let his hand go from her fist. She bit her lips and glared at Jessica's back as she goes further away. Chloe patted Kaya's shoulder.

“Don't mind her. It's not just a people or two that are like that.”

“I don't.”

Even after talking like that, her eyes were really sharp. Kaya let out a sigh and just rubbed her hands. It seemed like when Jo Minjoon held her hand just before, the feeling still remained. A rough yet soft, strange hand. However, she didn't hate that moment.

‘.....Why didn't I hate it?’

However she put it, he was still a man. Normally, even if he was trying to help, not feeling pleased was the normal thing. However, the moment Jo Minjoon grabbed her hands, that feeling was really profound. Was it because he felt like a real brother. Or.....

Kaya's sight was directed at Jo Minjoon. Many thoughts passed

by about him, and in the end only one thought remained. Kaya looked at him with resolved eyes.

‘Right. The important thing is if he returns or not, because it’s a land that you don’t know when war will happen.....’

Thinking about that situation, she felt the problem with Tess Gilly to be a minor thing. Jo Minjoon, who felt her gaze, turned his face and put on a strange face.

“What is it? What are those pitiful eyes?”

“Don’t interpret other’s eyes like you wish. Go quickly. I can’t go in because of you.”

“.....And why are you this hurried?”

Jo Minjoon moved his feet to go inside the restaurant, On the Lake. Inside the restaurant hall, the judges were seated at different tables. At each table, there were two chairs on the side opposite of the judges. Joseph, who was seated at the middle, raised his hand and said.

“Ah, you came. Take a seat since it’s more comfortable. You have to go with the person you are the most comfortable with.”

Even at those words that were heard to be ill tempered, Anderson didn’t even hesitate for a moment and sat in front of Joseph. Jo Minjoon hesitated for a moment. First, he didn’t want to seat in front of Emily. It wasn’t that he disliked her but, it was burdensome. On the other side, he was more comfortable with

Alan and Joseph and he could depend on them.

In the end, the table Jo Minjoon chose was Alan's. Chloe, that saw that and wanted to follow his back, Kaya got one step before her. She sat next to Jo Minjoon and crossed her arms, and while Chloe was hesitating, Sasha sat next to Anderson. And of course, Chloe and Ivanna went to Emily's table. Each judge opened their mouth. It was a voice that only those who were seated with them could hear.

“Do you know what restaurant is this?”

At Alan's question, Jo Minjoon and Kaya shook their heads. There was no way for Jo Minjoon to know of a restaurant in this far away land, and Kaya couldn't possibly be interested about such a luxurious restaurant as this. Alan continued speaking with a calm voice.

“On the Lake. Although it doesn't have a Michelin star, that's not because it's not delicious, but because evaluators don't come here. It has that good of a reputation. Check your surroundings.”

The inside of the restaurant had a clean and white feeling. Unlike the places that wanted to make an atmosphere and made the place dark, sunlight shone through the big windows and the lamps that were hanging on the ceiling shone so strongly their eyes hurt.

The greatest spectacle was the scenery that could be seen beyond the lake. When you looked at the lake that was shining with a blue light, it made you feel calm just like you have come to travel. At



that moment, many kinds of fishes or seafood were placed in front of them. They thought of it as normal, since the restaurant was on a lake. But the problem was the thing that was next to the dish.

‘.....Recipe?’

What Jo Minjoon saw with his eyes wasn't the window. A piece of paper that had the recipe written was placed next to it. As he slightly glanced at the other tables, the situation was similar. Only, that the contents of the dish was different. In front of Joseph was pasta or risotto, and in front of Emily was dishes that was clearly an appetizer at first glance. The moment he saw that, Jo Minjoon could vaguely guess the contents for this mission. Joseph raised his voice.

“The dishes in front of you is the content of this mission. You will have to cook the dishes that are placed in front of you as a chef from this restaurant for tonight. From right now..... you have 4 hours. It also means that in that time, you have to memorize the recipe and master it.”

“.....The team is just like the table?”

“Yes. That's right. The evaluation method will be through the opinions of the customers. In case you get a complaint that the flavor isn't as usual, the person that made that dish will have to make up for the costs used. You can't even make one customer not satisfied, understood?”

Those were some burdensome words. While Jo Minjoon was deep in his thoughts, Sasha raised her hand. Joseph looked at her.

“Speak.”

“.....Does the people that cooked the dish get revealed?”

“No. You don’t have to worry about that. Even if we do say that the participants of Grand Chef will be the ones cooking, we are planning to make it secret as to who cooked what.”

At his words, Sasha let out a sigh of relief. Maybe, if the owner of that dish was revealed, you wouldn’t know if it would turn out to be a popularity vote. If it became like that, the ones that had the advantage were Kaya and Jo Minjoon. For them, they could only worry about that.

Jo Minjoon sliced the well cooked salmon and put it in his mouth. He could slightly feel a fishy smell, but it seemed like it was done on purpose, rather than they couldn’t catch it. And because it was roasted with butter, that fishy smell was felt more deliciously.

It was the same for the codfish mousse. The characteristic smell of the codfish was felt densely, and because of the soft texture, the flavor was felt more clearly. But it was only that. Could it be that it was because it was still a growing restaurant? There were no dishes that were disgustingly delicious.

‘That’s the difficult part.’

It was easy to make a delicious dish. Even if you were an amateur, if you followed a recipe, you could make edible food. However, if you didn’t live a life that was interested in cooking, you wouldn’t be to cook food that would amaze others.

Even if it was a restaurant that was expected to receive a Michelin star, it wasn't anything special. Actually, for the one stars, rather than being amazing it was only a fine restaurant.

"Now that I see, I heard that there was a fuss. Are you okay?"

In the middle of eating, Alan looked at Kaya and asked her. Kaya's mouth twitched and then she replied.

"I'm fine."

".....Even so, you have indeed grown. If you were like before, you would still be angry."

"Am I a monster that only gets angry?"

Kaya replied with a voice as if it was a given and ate a sea mussel that was dipped in cream sauce. Alan forced a laugh. Did she already forget that she acted like a frightened chicken? He looked at Jo Minjoon and opened his mouth.

"You really have a lot of hardships."

At that moment when Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly, Kaya was thinking of another thing at the word hardship which Alan said. It was about Jo Minjoon going to Korea. Thinking about the bullets and the bombs that exploded in Korea, she couldn't even properly feel the flavor of the food.

In the end, Kaya took out her phone and checked the internet. The contents of the thing she searched was simple: Condition for

refugees application. However, there were no applications for Korea. Alan looked at Kaya acting like that and frowned.

“Kaya. You aren’t going to eat?”

“Ah, wait a moment. I have something I have to urgently find out.”

At her blunt voice, he did get a bit angry for a moment, but honestly speaking it was difficult to expect some table manners from Kaya that shouldn’t even have gone to a restaurant. On top of that, she said that it was urgent, so he was uncertain to tell her something.

Q : What’s the fastest way for a korean to immigrate to the United States?

She posted a question on a questions site and turned the display of her phone off. For now, she wanted to at least think like this. To be a war... even if it was Kaya, who had lived a harsh life, the word war felt heavy and scary.

‘I thought that Minjoon had lived comfortably.’

Looking at the fact that he had even become a soldier, she thought that he may have lived a harsher life than she had thought. As she was feeling a sense of belonging to that truth, Jo Minjoon turned to look at her as if it was strange.

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“.....I won't grumble from now on.”

“No, why are you like this so suddenly? Did I do something wrong?”

“Did someone tell you that you did? I just..... Ah, wait. A reply came.”

Kaya took out the shaking handphone from her pocket. She squinted her eyes and started to read at the comments. There were so many comments that it filled her glee. And just like everyone that didn't receive good education, she was weak with words.

“Job immigration..... Family immigration. For the job immigration, it takes quite a few years and the conditions are also picky..... It seems like the family immigration is done quite quickly.”

However, as far as she knew, Jo Minjoon didn't have a family that had citizenship in the US. When she was about to let out a sigh of regret, the last part of the comment suddenly grabbed her attention.

A : If you don't have a family, marrying someone with an American citizenship is the fastest way. But of course, it's only for when you have someone to marry.

## Chapter 90: The Weight Of A Restaurant (3)

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Kaya froze her face as if she got bewildered. To marry. It was a word she had never imagined. Jo Minjoon slightly looked towards Kaya. Kaya got surprised and opened her mouth by instinct.

“What, what? Why?”

“.....Why do you get that surprised? I just looked at you.”

“Your look was greasy.”

“I don’t think that my eyes could get greasy.”

Jo Minjoon frowned and pulled both of his eyes. He didn’t have double eyelids and his upper eyelids wasn’t even deep. He looked like white people couldn’t expect a profound look from him. Kaya coughed.

“Shut up. Just eat. You have to understand the flavor.”

“But you were the one that wasn’t eating until just now and was doing something else.”

“For who was I..... Leave it.”

Kaya got angry and looked at him sharply, but soon grinded her teeth and chewed the food with strength. It was to the point that it made you wonder if she would be able to properly feel the flavor.

Jo Minjoon slowly looked over the dishes. They were mostly 7 or 8 points. Compared to the reputation, it could be quite a low score, but it could also be seen as being decent. The skills of the head chef would be much better than the others, but the role of the head chef

was to manage the dishes rather than to cook them.

Of course, if you only practiced the same menu, then the quality of the food would improve. But honestly it lacked something. It wasn't in vain that the head chef himself cooked a meal for a VVIP customer. And of course, pointing out that it was customer discrimination was also a problem.

That's why it was an impressive thing that they went to Rose Island last time. It wasn't only the management of the head chef or his recipe, but also the talent of the chefs that each had their own section, was quite significant. They would have to take into account many things, but it was still impressive even taking things into account.

Compared to Rose Island, he could see many lacking points, but just because of that it didn't mean that the On The Lake restaurant was a low quality one. It was flocking with customers, so constantly making a 9-point dish wasn't an easy thing. Didn't the two-star restaurant he went to when he was in New York only have two 9-point dishes?

“Does it suit your tastes?”

“Yes, it's fine. What's the price for here?”

“I'm not sure about those that are served a la carte, but if you choose the most expensive thing on the menu, \$60 is sufficient.”

“I think that it's worth \$60, although it doesn't mean that there are no lacking points.”

Alan didn't particularly ask the score. Looking at Jo Minjoon's

reaction, he didn't seem to be really impressed. If he didn't talk well about it, it was better to not ask the score in the first place because you wouldn't be able to make anyone happy, much more when Jo Minjoon was soon going to work in this restaurant's kitchen.

The meal ended and Kaya and Minjoon were reading the recipe while standing in the kitchen. Jo Minjoon asked in a calm voice.

“Did you memorize everything?”

“.....I'm weak at memorizing.”

“Don't just think of it as some words, but remember the cooking method. Or should we do it like this? You take care of the roasting, and I will take care of everything aside of that. Even if we do it like that, we should be able to work quite effectively.”

“But do restaurants really work like that?”

“I wonder. They should each have their own styles.”

Jo Minjoon said in a casual voice. At his attitude, Kaya looked at him with sharp eyes and then she started to read the recipe as if competitiveness surged within her.

What she was in charge of were the fishes would that serve as the main dish. There was nothing aside from fish, since On The Lake was next to Lake Michigan and took on the shape of a restaurant specializing in seafood. But despite that, they don't only use fish caught in the lake.

‘It's a sort of concept.’



Seafood that's sold in a restaurant next to a lake. If you were a customer, it was a combination that would make you feel some kind of romance. Jo Minjoon slightly looked at Kaya and asked.

"How was the meal?"

"How was what? The food?"

"That's also it but..... You told me last time that you have never gone to a restaurant in your life. This place seems quite fine. Do you feel like it became a good experience?"

".....Ah, right. It was the first."

Kaya frowned. Thinking about it, it was her first restaurant experience, but thinking about this being a mission, she couldn't properly enjoy it. She felt depressed. Kaya said in a mortifying voice.

"Today's null."

"Why? You didn't like it?"

"There's no way I would. This place is full of cameras, so I can't eat without even being able to bend my back."

"Isn't it normal to eat without bending your back?"

"I don't like eating while putting on a dignified air. Putting your head in the dish is the normal thing. Just moving the fork is uncomfortable, so how will you eat?"

"Then why didn't you bend it?"

"If I ate like that, those bastards will badmouth me again. That she shows that she couldn't learn and eat. Although it's true, I still don't like it."

Kaya pouted her lower lip and got depressed. Jo Minjoon looked at her lips that seemed like a beak with eyes that seemed to be thinking about something else and then, he said with a soft voice.

“If I got a chance to be in charge a restaurant, I will make you eat however you want.”

“.....And when are you going to do it?”

“I wonder. Even if I get in really late, I will be able to do it in 20 years.”

The normal age when chefs got in charge of their own restaurant was on their early thirties, if they were fast. Of course, there would be some cases that geniuses became owners of a restaurant that already got a Michelin star in their twenties, but you needed many cases for that to happen. Skills was an obvious thing, but you also needed popularity and funds. It was a case that was so rare it could be counted with your hand.

“Thinking about it, I should be able to get in charge of one immediately. The winner of season 1, they said that he/she recently became a head chef of a restaurant. But although they have a separate owner.....For someone that came from the market to become that much, you said it all. If I win, I will be able to do that for you quite quickly.”

“.....Victory is mine, though? Don’t talk about other things and keep talking about the restaurant thing. If you get to open a restaurant, where are you going to do it? .....It isn’t Korea, right?”

“I don’t know. Taking into account the familiarity of the ingredients and the eating habits, it will be the best to do it in

Korea.....”

“You have more fans in the US. How about just opening one here?”

Kaya said with quite a gentle voice. Honestly speaking, marriage immigration was nonsense, so she wondered if he worked in the US as a chef, it would be possible to immigrate for the job. She didn't like it that Jo Minjoon went to live to a place that you wouldn't know when war will happen.

However Jo Minjoon looked like he didn't understand Kaya. He looked at her with weird eyes.

“But why are you so suddenly speaking about this?”

“No, just so.”

Kaya evaded her sight. It was somewhat suspicious, but he couldn't keep bothering her about that. The other participants in the kitchen were already rushing in to cook.

“Let's practice for now.”

“.....Okay.”

Kaya, too, knew that it wasn't the time to worry about that. Since she wanted to clean and descale the fish, a teen wearing a cooking uniform came and lent her a basket. On the basket were the ingredients, such as fish. A smile appeared on the teen's white face.

“I peeled off the scales, and I already poured the olive oil and the sauce. If you aren’t planning on putting in purée separately, you can just roast it.”

“Ah, thank you. Are you the chef here?”

“It’s embarrassing to be called a chef. I’m still a trainee. I’ve always watched the two of you during the broadcast. Ah, the name is Eddy Reedus.”

“Ah, it’s Jo Minjoon. This is.....”

Jo Minjoon turned to look at Kaya, but she only stared at him without saying anything. Jo Minjoon poked Kaya’s side. Kaya frowned and opened her mouth.

“.....This time for self introductions is really corny. Kaya Lotus. Even so, you already know my name.”

“Ahaha, your temperament is the same as I saw in the TV. I like that sincerity of yours!”

“Now that you say that you like it, I will say one more sincere word. You are bothering me so get away. I don’t have the leisure to gossip.”

At Kaya’s mean words, Eddy raised both of his hands and quietly fell back. Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya and frowned.

“I told you to fix that attitude of yours.”

“If I fix my character, that’s still a character? It’s a concept.”

“.....I also understand that, but why are you acting so mean towards a person that came with a goodwill?”

“He’s bothering me. He’s not even my customer or my superior,

is there a need to match to his level?”

“There’s not even a need to match his level when an understanding relationship comes into existence.”

“Understanding relationship or whatever, stop those difficult words. Let’s cook the fish for now. You have to also feel how the fire is here.”

As Kaya talked like that, she put the frying pan over the fire. Jo Minjoon brought the basket and opened his mouth.

“How do we divide our roles? I think that the effectiveness will fall if we each take care of one dish. Would it be better to split into the one in charge of roasting and the one in charge of handling the fish and the plating?”

“Handling the fish was already done by that guy. Was it Edd?”

“Eddy. Even so, when we are making things like mousse, we have to separate the fish meat by ourselves.”

“.....Fine. let’s do it like this. I will get in charge of the things related to fire. The rest of the things, do it yourself. Hands, do you think it will not be enough?”

“No. I can do it.”

Jo Minjoon put on a confident smile. Originally, his hands weren’t that slow, but as recently, cooking became part of his life. Compared to before, his hands had certainly become faster. The rest was a problem of stamina. However, after he experienced the food truck and the buffet missions, he was confident that he had got the hang of it.

“Minjoon. If you are free, check if the light came on the frier over there.”

“It did. Anything else?”

“No. For now, I will start roasting the fish. Cut some vegetables.”

“Fine.”

It was a strange feeling. It was the first time they had cooperated after Kaya's elimination mission. Precisely speaking, it had been so long since they had worked together in a mission. He remembered that time, and having survived until now made him flustered.

On the other side, Kaya, who was concentrating on cooking, was also thinking about how to tell Jo Minjoon about the theme that was bothering her. No, precisely speaking, rather than telling him, she was wondering about how to convince him.

‘.....Let's think about that later, Kaya. Concentrate on cooking for now.’

As she poured white wine on the salmon steak, which was getting cooked in a shy pink colour, fire rose and it made the air hot. She acted like she was used to it, but every time the fire rose and she felt the heat near her hand it made her frightened. Before, there was also a time that she had turned over the frying pan. Nowadays, she had gotten more used to it.....

“Cool this down for me. I'm going to make the garnish to complement it.”

“.....I have nothing to do.”

“After you do that, I’m going to make the fried sea bass, why don’t you apply potato starch on it?”

“Fine. Understood. Here, the vegetables.”

After Kaya seasoned the vegetables with only olive oil and salt and roasted it. And after that the time to try the dish came. Jo Minjoon put the salmon steak in his mouth and nodded. 7 points. Although it was made without any special sauce and only seasoned by salt and the aroma of the white wine, the flavor was still good. Rather because of the simple flavor of just being seasoned with salt, he thought that it would be able to get the best of the reactions from the customers.

Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon’s lips with anxiousness. In the end, she couldn’t hold it anymore and opened her mouth first.

“Is it delicious?”

“Eat it. You also know the flavor well.”

“If I eat something I made I feel like my tongue gets dull.”

“There’s also that. But it’s delicious. Customers will like it, if it’s this much.”

The problem was on that they had to maintain this quality. Kaya let out a sigh and went to the sink holding the frying pan. She was planning to lightly wash it, but Kaya frowned at that moment.

“Why doesn’t this come out?”

Keeg. Keeg. Even after turning the tap many times, the water

didn't come out well. After a few moments, since it was clogged, the water came gushing out like a waterfall. After hitting the frying pan, the water rose to the skies. While Kaya was still frozen in astonishment, Minjoon's eyes were directed to the course of the water. Jo Minjoon, who had looked at the hot oil boiling, shouted.

“Get down!”

His body was faster than his words. Jo Minjoon quickly ran toward Kaya and threw his body. Bang! An explosion similar to that of a gun rang without stop. Although the explosion didn't last for long, it was a sufficient time for the oil to bounce. Kaya was putting absentminded eyes as if she had got a shock and then, got surprised and lifted Jo Minjoon's body.

“Are..... Are you fine?”

She was so surprised that her voice came out trembling. Jo Minjoon didn't reply and instead put on a contorted face. Kaya's eyes were directed to Jo Minjoon's right side of the neck. The oil reached him and a large part of the skin turned red. Kaya extended her hand with a face that wanted to cry at any moment and wiped off the remaining oil. Everytime she touched the oil, she felt that her hand was getting burnt, but she didn't mind it. Kaya yelled with a frightened voice.

“Minjoon, Minjoon! Doctor! What the heck are you!”



# Chapter 91: The Weight Of A Restaurant (4)

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“.....My head is ringing. Don't shout.”

Jo Minjoon forced a groan and barely spoke. Kaya looked at him with reddened eyes. Tears gathered and while it seemed like it would fall at any moment, Kaya endured it. She opened her mouth. Her rough and hard voice was trembling.

“I'm sorry. I, I.....”

“The tap was the one at fault. Why are you sorr-ugh.....!”

At the feeling that his neck burnt, Jo Minjoon closed his eyes tightly and bit his lips. It was a pain so horrible it didn't make him able to control his expression. Jo Minjoon grinded his teeth and quickly took out his cooking uniform and threw it. At that cold air, he thought that the pain momentarily disappeared, but after a while it began to burn again.

The doctor, who was hesitating because the oil might pop again, approached Jo Minjoon with an alert face and raised him up. At the accident, Chloe asked with a surprised voice.

“Do-doctor. He's fine, right?”

“I don't know if I should call this fortunate, but the injury isn't severe. There are blisters at some parts, but they are mostly first degree. If he takes care of it well, there will be no infections. Although the problem is the [pigmentation](#)..... I'm sorry. It seems like it's unavoidable for a scar to appear.”

The doctor spoke with an unconfident attitude. Kaya clenched her fists with an angry face, but it wasn't because she was angry at someone else. She didn't like herself. Korea? Immigration? There's no point in worrying about that if she always end up committing accidents such as this.

The doctor placed a wet towel in warm water, put it over the injury, and opened the mouth.

“You will have to keep replacing the towel. If you feel that the heat is getting dispersed, wash it with cold water. You will have to stay like this for at least 30 minutes.”

“I will do it!”

The moment when Kaya was going to open her mouth, Chloe took a step before her. She looked at Jo Minjoon with a teary face.

“My god..... It really hurts, right?”

“It does hurt. But times like this also happen.”

He tried to force out a calm laugh, but only convulsions appeared on his face. Chloe let out a sigh and changed the towel. The water was that was covering his skin was pressing down the pain. Jo Minjoon said with an exhausted voice.

“Thanks.”

“.....Don't make me worried. It's also hard for those that are looking.”

“Sorry.”

“And don’t be sorry.”

Chloe pouted her lips. Kaya just looked at him and only then did she feel the pain in her hand. Perhaps she got a little burnt when she was wiping off the oil from his neck, that his palm hurt a little. Kaya didn’t say anything and just went to the sink and turned the cold water. Jo Minjoon, that was looking at what Kaya was doing twitched his brows.

“Kaya, did you perhaps get burnt?”

“This much can’t be considered a burn. Don’t mind.”

“How can I not mind? Doctor! Please check Kaya’s hand too.”

At those words, the doctor checked Kaya’s hands. And then, shook his head. Only after Jo Minjoon had heard that it wasn’t an injury did Jo Minjoon let out a sigh of relief. Chloe’s eyes that was looking at him got quite complicated. She opened her mouth with a low voice.

“How gentle can you be? You got this big of an injury in your neck and you have the leisure to worry about others..... no, about Kaya?”

“.....It’s not about worrying or not. I can see it with my eyes.”

Chloe didn’t say anything. She felt that she wouldn’t feel good with whatever she said. And she knew really well why she was feeling like that and the reason for it. Chloe let out a sigh and changed the towel.

“Worry about your own body for now. The doctor said it before that there’s a high chance for a scar to appear. How sad is it for a scar to appear on the neck?”

“.....You just seem like my mom.”

“I know really well that that’s not a compliment.”

Chloe replied with a serious face as if it wasn’t the time to be joking. It was at that moment. Martin approached with a face mixed with worry and perplex and asked.

“Minjoon, is the pain okay now?”

“It’s because of Chloe.”

“Why, should we go to a near hospital?”

“No. I’m fine. We can’t do that just because of this injury. Also, the mission is right in front of our eyes.”

Martin turned to look at the doctor as if they could do that. The doctor let out a sigh and said.

“Although it’s not to the point that you should go to a hospital, we can also make a simple treatment here, only that the pain will be severe. On top of that, he shouldn’t go near the fire.”

“.....Even so, Kaya was the one in charge of the fire, it wouldn’t matter much.”

In Martin’s position, it was a fine development. Jo Minjoon rescuing Kaya in front of the exploding oil was quite heroic, and the viewers would also like it. The problem was on who was going to get responsible on that oil explosion accident. The sink not

functioning properly was obviously a management problem of the restaurant but..... Just because there was a problem with the water pipe, there wouldn't normally be a case where oil exploded. His head could only complicated because of many reasons.

“I’m sorry.”

“I told you before. That there’s no need for you to apologize.”

At Kaya’s words, Jo Minjoon replied with a soft voice. Kaya plucked her lips with her fingernails, and then said with a heavy voice.

“I will certainly do well.”

“Right. Let’s.”

Jo Minjoon extended his fist. Kaya hesitated for a moment, and then bumped it with his. Anderson, who was looking at the two, opened his mouth.

“I think that even if they send you to a graveyard you would be able to film a melodrama.”

He had probably said without thinking about anything, but Chloe, who heard that, couldn’t control her expression. Ivanna, who was next to her, put her hand on top of Chloe’s shoulder. Chloe looked back at Ivanna and smiled awkwardly. Ivanna whispered in a low voice.

“Just because she departed first, it doesn’t mean that she will

arrive first.”

Chloe couldn't reply anything.

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Regardless of the accident that happened in the kitchen, time flowed and night came. And on Kaya's frying pan, the fire rose and was flambéing the fish. Jo Minjoon gave her a plate that he had finished decorating, and looked at what Kaya was doing. There was no case that she failed in cooking, not even once. Thinking about her skills, it may be something obvious, but in a situation where the orders of the customers came all at once, you could see it like she would have to fight to be able to do that.

“The fried sea bass is done. Pour some sauce.”

“Right.”

Jo Minjoon setted garlic purée that seemed like tangsuyuk sauce and placed over the fried sea bass and the fried green onions. He looked at it as if the score was an obvious 8 and admired it. His level now was also level 7, but he wasn't confident on being able to constantly cook 8-point dishes. On top of that, among the dishes she had cooked, compared to the ones they ate in the hall, there were some which scored higher. Rather than Kaya's recipe being good, he wondered if she didn't miss the points which the chefs of this restaurant did.

‘You really are.....’

Jo Minjoon's eyes became complicated. Will he be able to reach her, be able to walk next to her? And if he did get some hope, he felt like Kaya started to walk a step ahead of him. He didn't think that he would be able to close that gap.

Kaya also had her own complicated thoughts. Of course, she was concentrating on cooking, but between that was hidden regret and anger. She wished for Jo Minjoon to look at her virtues at least once. In the last eliminating mission and in the team mission, she had always leaned on him. She didn't want that anymore.

‘I also have it. I have skills and determination. I also.....’

Fire rose once again in the frying pan. Looking at that faint violet fire that was inside that fire, Kaya's eyes shone clearly. She couldn't let Jo Minjoon get eliminated. At least, she didn't want him team up with her and get eliminated. She didn't know if the unlucky team would be given an eliminating mission or will be eliminated on the spot..... But whatever side it was, it wasn't a nice story for Jo Minjoon. Because with his body condition, it wouldn't be easy for him to do any kind of missions.

She wanted to protect him. Just like Jo Minjoon had helped her until now, she wanted to return that to him. Perhaps, those thoughts could have made her think about the immigration. That thought was showing up on many parts of her face: her closed mouth, close-knit eyebrows, and sharp eyes.

Jo Minjoon looked at Kaya acting like that, and returned to

calmly chopping the vegetables. It could be seen as he was chopping them beforehand, but the freshness compared to the recently sliced ones would only fall. There were many cases where if you acted hurriedly, you would feel like it passed faster, but it would only last longer. He wanted to tell those things to Kaya, but.....this wasn't the situation to do so.

As he only received the dishes from Kaya and made the decorations on it, he could feel that there was beauty in French dishes. His decoration level was 5. But of course, honestly speaking, it wasn't that important. Excluding Anderson, most were level 5 or 6. He wondered that to go beyond that level, one would need to be able to make a [dragon from a carrot](#). Rather than being a chef, that ability is better reserved for a food coordinator.

The plating Jo Minjoon could do with his skill was drawing the sauce with a spoon to be like brush writing, or giving it the feeling of modern art. Most of the dishes had some food in the middle of the plate, and in the surrounding of it was sauce spread, but even with just that it was quite cool. At least, it gave you the feeling that you have come to a luxurious restaurant. Jo Minjoon smiled with satisfaction.

“It seems like this one also turned out well. You have done well.”

“.....Yeah.”

Kaya didn't get happy or grumble and just put on a strange face. Her eyes slightly glanced to Jo Minjoon's injury gauze. Jo Minjoon said as if he was throwing the words while still looking at the plate.



“Don’t mind about me.”

“How can I do that?”

“I expected that this would happen when I decided to work in a kitchen. And rather than a mistake, it was an accident, so don’t worry that much. It’s more comfortable for me if you don’t do it.”

At Jo Minjoon’s blunt voice, even if she knew that she didn’t have to, she got angry. Kaya took out the codfish from the steamer and said.

“I am going to mind.”

“I told you that there’s no need to.”

“There was also no need for you to do it but you did. But you are telling me not to mind?”

“I’m.....”

Jo Minjoon wanted to reply something but just shut his mouth. Thinking about it, he didn’t have any words to reply back. Kaya snorted.

“See? You are the same.”

“... ..”

“So don’t say anything even if I worry about you. It’s something unavoidable, this.”

He opened his mouth trying to say something, but in the end only a smile appeared. Kaya blushed to her ear and turned her head. While mumbling with a sulky voice.

“And don’t smile like that.”

Kaya concentrated again on the pan. After participating in this competition, it has been quite a while since she had cooked for someone. But of course, making breakfast and lunch for Jo Minjoon was also cooking for someone but..... It was different right now. Because her dishes were the ones that would decide Jo Minjoon’s elimination.

So the pan she was grabbing was felt more heavily. However, it wasn’t a bad feeling. She didn’t know why, but every time she finished every dish the satisfaction was high. And there was also a good result. The customers that were in the hall were indeed important. But she liked the fact that if she was able to cook well right now, she would be able to save Minjoon. Although there was some burden on it..... compared to the times when she had to worry about eating three meals a day, this doesn’t compare much.

The sea bass’s oil got mixed with olive oil and sizzled. The oil seeped through the knife marks on the meat, and she could feel the meat cooking more clearly than usual. It wasn’t a feeling of cooking with an enjoying heart. Perhaps, it could be closer to that of the head of a family. Responsibility. The weight of that short word became Kaya’s strength.

‘.....This one seems rather well-done.’

She handed the roasted sea bass and apricot purée to Minjoon and she turned to look at the frying pan again. Jo Minjoon

frowned. It wasn't because there was a problem; no, if there was a good problem, there was one.

‘.....9 points?’

The cooking score was 9. A roasted sea bass and apricot purée made by putting in ginger and cinnamon. Although it was a good combination, he didn't think that it was so special to get 9 points. But for it to be 9 points... rather than the sauce, it was difficult to get that score if you didn't roast the sea bass perfectly.

Jo Minjoon got so surprised that he even forgot the pain of his injury and looked at Kaya. He thought that his eyes would start to convulse, and a collapsed smile appeared on his mouth.

[Kaya Lotus]

Cooking level : 8

Baking level : 6

Tasting level : 10

Decoration level : 6

## Chapter 92: The Weight Of A Restaurant (5)

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“.....Why are you looking at me like that?”

At Kaya's voice, his consciousness slowly returned. Jo Minjoon looked away with an unnatural face. Why could that be? He knew that Kaya was a genius, and how much she could grow, but the moment her cooking level raised, a corner of his heart hurt.

‘.....Was it jealousy?’

Even if that was the case, there would be nothing wrong because he was also a person. Even if they were close, looking that she was getting farther away, he could only feel bad. To feel jealous at a kid, and at someone he had once admired when he was already a grown up.

And the 9 points didn't appear only once. Although not every dish turned out to be 9 points continuously, the number slowly started to increase. Could she have climbed a wall? In Jo Minjoon's experience, the level didn't increase when you accumulated more experience. When you had enough skills, that skill was shown in the levels. He thought that perhaps, Kaya was in the boundaries of the level 7 and 8, and was only waiting to surpass it.

Jo Minjoon stopped thinking. He couldn't put in jealousy and fidgets in a dish he was going to serve to the customers. Jo Minjoon's eyes got fixed on the dishes.

His injury hurt.

‘.....Huh?’

Alan’s eyes became filled with suspicion. The atmosphere between the people that were in the hall got a little softer. It was a difficult thing to happen. The people that went to a restaurant can be divided in two: those that simply want to enjoy that time, and the ones that want to evaluate it.

That ratio varied depending on the restaurant. In the case it was a restaurant that certainly got recognized, there would be more of the former case. But for a restaurant like On the Lake that had just opened, the latter part could be more unavoidable. Much more when it was a situation where it was announced that the participants of Grand Chef would be the ones cooking instead of the normal chefs. There would be some expectation, but the doubt could only be as big as the expectation.

The people seemed to be thinking like that when they were eating. ‘Let’s see how well can you cook.’ That colour was clearly shown in their attitudes. In their knives, in the shape of their mouths chewing the fish, and in their eyes. Their attitude was like that even before they ate the food, so the satisfaction when they ate it could only be less than usual. Because the feeling you got when you ate something with expectation would be completely different. Even if it was the same dish, it could get a completely different score.

That's why while customers were eating, no particular reactions could be seen. It's fine, it was that much. However at one time, that feeling got eased up. And the line for that was only one. It was whether you ate Kaya's and Jo Minjoon's main dish or not.

But it wasn't that it was like that from the start. The change happened only after 10 tables got empty. However, the after effects of that change was really clear. The smile in their faces became denser and more laughter could be heard. At times, even exclamations could be heard.

'We will know how the evaluation will turn out.'

"Hmhm, wouldn't it be good for us to slowly start eating too?"

Emily, that was looking at the reaction of the customers gulped and said. Alan laughed bitterly. When she was at the table, she became a really easy girl.

The judges sat on the table. Emily turned over the menu and opened her mouth.

"Are we all going to order the same thing?"

"Doesn't it matter whatever it is?"

"It's better to order many things and share."

".....I respect your tastes, but I don't like to share food with others. It's unhygienic and I can't focus on the flavor."

"Acting so hard. Joseph, what about you?"

“I’m sorry, but I think the same as Alan.”

“Whew, only I became the boorish one.”

Emily pouted her lips regrettably. Alan looked at Emily hesitatingly and after he let out a sigh, opened his mouth.

“Before I place the food in my mouth, I will serve you some. That much I can do it.”

“Really?”

“I’m not the kind of person to lie with this kind of things.”

At Alan’s blunt voice, Emily’s face bloomed like a flower. Alan coughed and looked away.

The dishes were quite fine. The saffron sea mussel soup made by Chloe and Ivanna, and the codfish mousse didn’t have that much of a difference compared to the ones that was made by the chefs before. But of course, as they were following the recipe and doing as they were taught, there wouldn’t be much of a difference, but even following it was quite an amazing thing.

And of course, the highlight was the main dish. Looking at the order and quality, Alan exclaimed after putting the fried sea bass in his mouth without hesitating. It was one of the most delicious things he ate in Grand Chef that could be counted in his hand. It was so delicious that you could say that it was the most delicious thing Kaya had made until now. The deepness of the flavor, the stimulation, the softness, and.....

“.....It’s the best until now?”

For an epicurean, it was quite a weak flavor expression, but Alan didn’t particularly point that out. Best. It was a dish that was enough to express it with only that word. His sea bass and Emily’s salmon steak...

“Customers can only help but laugh.”

The amazing point was that they weren’t only presenting this quality for only one dish. They wouldn’t just present a better made dish just because they were judges. In the first place, you wouldn’t even be able to know who ordered what. If all the other normal customers were eating this kind of dish, in case they didn’t have a perverted like sense of taste, they could only get satisfied. Joseph smiled faintly and said.

“If it’s this much, I can even entrust the main section.....No, there wouldn’t even be a problem if I entrusted being the sous chef. Haha..... For the day when the level of the participants raised this much. I don’t know if we would be able to get satisfied in the upcoming seasons.”

“More feisty judges would have to come.”

Alan smirked and replied.

The meal of the customers ended. Alan, that saw the postscript, nodded as if he understood. If the flavor of what they ate and the dishes of the customers wasn’t different, getting this result was extremely obvious.



Even talking with results, there were almost no complaints in front of Kaya and Jo Minjoon. Their dishes had a flavor beyond the original one and got good comments, and at the same time it got the less amount of indications. And the indications came mostly from the people when Kaya couldn't get completely accustomed in the beginning.

Between the kitchen and the hall, in the bar shaped lobby, the judges called all of the participants. Most of them seemed nervous. Even Kaya, who showed surprising growth, was like that. She couldn't know that her cooking had improved one step more because she hadn't even tasted the flavor. Only, she felt that her dishes were completed better than usual.

“How did you feel today?”

Nobody replied at that question. Joseph, that was slowly looking at everyone, stopped his sight in Jo Minjoon. Precisely speaking, it was on his injury. He slowly opened his mouth.

“There are things like this in the restaurant. Normally, in a situation where you should go to the hospital, you can't even cry of the pain. Cases where you have to keep working while only putting on a gauze, there are much more than you think. Because whether you get hurt or not, it doesn't change that customers are waiting in the hall. That is the meaning of responsibility.”

Kaya gritted her teeth. There was no day that the word responsibility hit her as much as today. Joseph slowly looked at

Kaya and then, clapped his hands and brightened the mood.

“It’s also time to slowly announce the results. It’s of course, but not all of you were able to get good comments. Perhaps, it would be comments that are worse compared to what you have made. However, that’s something you should be able to carry out.”

Joseph closed his mouth and Alan continued speaking.

“Getting good comments in this mission is more difficult than what you think. In the tongue of the customers, expectation, wariness and suspicion coats it. On top of that, that feeling would have been deeper because it wasn’t the chefs of this restaurant cooking, but yourselves. But regardless of that situation, there was a team that became able to get good comments. At the same time, it’s the team that will get exempted from the eliminating mission. The other teams will do the elimination mission, and one person per team will get eliminated.”

Silence flowed for a moment. Ivanna held Chloe’s hands tightly. She couldn’t lose. She didn’t want to. Her eyes, that was reflecting that ardent wish, directed to Alan’s mouth.

“Kaya, Minjoon. Congratulations.”

But there were no miracles.

“It will hurt.”

“Ugh.....”

The big and long needle got sucked in the arm without mercy. It would be funny for someone that wasn't even a kid to be afraid of it, but even so, you couldn't help something that scared you. The nurse smiled and said.

“Ease yourself. If your muscles are this tensed up, it will hurt more.”

“Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon replied while laughing awkwardly. While the other four were doing the eliminating mission, Jo Minjoon had to move around the hospital under the doctor's judgement. And of course, Kaya had to look at the eliminating mission. Originally, Jo Minjoon should also have..... But there was no one that pointed that out.

Because they didn't know that he would be taken to a hospital room for only a burn.

‘By now.....’

Jo Minjoon looked at the clock. He didn't know what the theme of the mission would be, but by now it should already have concluded. He thought about messaging Kaya, but he didn't. He didn't know why, but he didn't feel that comfortable right now. Was it because he would have to part ways with at least one

person? Or if even that wasn't it.....

He didn't tell his parents that he got an injury. Even so, they would get to know of it when they watched the broadcast, but by then it would have healed quite a bit. Then, he would be able to tell them not to worry with more confident words.

His head hurt. Was it because of the medicine? As he slowly closed his eyes at the sleepiness, he opened them again. But it was strange. The lights of the hospital room were turned off.

‘Did I doze off?’

He felt something strange in his right hand. It was at that moment when he turned his head while slowly blinking. He saw hair. A long, curly black hair. It was Kaya's hair. Under her hair that seemed to have gotten a static, Kaya was sleeping under the bed. Her hand was also holding Jo Minjoon's.

He didn't want to wake her up. Jo Minjoon placed his hand in Kaya's hair for a moment, and grabbed his phone. Some messages were blinking.

[ Chloe : Is your body okay?]

[ Chloe : Two members got eliminated. Ivanna and Sasha. It doesn't feel right to explain the contents of the mission and the methods right now, right? ]

[ Chloe : I wanted to be next to you, but I'm sorry. And I couldn't even say something because you were sleeping. They said that only

one person could be next to you at night. Even so, you would like..... Kaya being next to you than me, right? ]

It was a message that didn't seem to have quite a good vibe. Because for it to be Chloe, she was really dispirited. However, he thought that it may be because she got separated with Ivanna and Sasha. Because if it was Chloe, she would feel hurt even with the elimination of others. Jo Minjoon tapped on another message.

[ Kaya : I'm going right now.]

“Right. You came.”

Jo Minjoon smirked and looked down at Kaya. What kind of dream was she dreaming that every time she mumbled she said ‘immigration..... immigrate.’

‘Looking at her like this, her face is really small.’

Not only her face was small, but her head was also small. On some of the comments was written ‘How would she be able to think properly with that small head of hers?’. But it was so much he could understand those words.

Because originally, it was a face he would have only been able to see through a screen. Originally, he shouldn't be able to see her like this. Sensing the aroma of well ripened fruits on her body, her hands being rough but her palms being soft, and inside her made-up pride, there was nervousness and anxiousness. Originally, he

shouldn't have known all of that.

He should be happy with just that, but why couldn't his heart be like that? Why did he turn to look at the window that popped next to Kaya's face? No, it wasn't the problem of the window. Even if he dismissed it, and turned to look away. In his head, he was still thinking of her level. And at the same time, his.

Jo Minjoon just looked at her face. Because of the darkness, he couldn't even see half the outline of her face, but her nose, lips and chin was shining faintly. Although she was no different of being a rash little girl, she will soon become a lady. And she will become a chef. A chef that can't be compared to no one.

‘Will I be able to reach her?’

Jo Minjoon gripped her hand hardly. Kaya rustled and let out a groan. By then, it was already after he had let go of her hand. Jo Minjoon looked outside the window. The night was deep, however, he didn't get sleepy.

# Chapter 93: Four People, Four Dreams (1)

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Aside from Jo Minjoon, there was one more person that couldn't sleep that night: Chloe. She was lying on the bed and while she closed and opened her eyes a few times, it already got bright. In the end, she put on her sports clothes and went out to the garden. She thought that if she sweated a bit, she would be able to think more clearly.

However, that thought was only half right. As she exercised to the point her lungs and heart hurt, and her muscles were about to rip, she started to think more about idle thoughts with her cleared mind.

Looking at the sky that had an ash and blue colour, Chloe thought. 'Is it dawn? Morning?' It became her train of thought. She didn't know if there was a need to separate this moment as dawn or morning, or if it could only be called as the boundary between that.

And that train of thought also continued about her. Just where was she standing on, As a cook and as a girl? She wasn't standing firmly anywhere. It was uncertain. She remembered the words Ivanna said before she left.

'Don't be scared, Chloe. I will cheer for you.'

There was no need to think about what she was scared about because it was too obvious. Just how in the world did she understand that well about her? It was surprising. It's true that she

was uncertain, although it's more apt to call it indecisive. In cooking..... And in her attitude towards Jo Minjoon.

Last night, when Kaya said that she was going to guard the hospital room, why couldn't she say anything? You go to rest, I will do it. Those words were filling up her chest, but why couldn't she bring it up? Was it because she thought that it was obvious for Kaya to do it? That it was obvious that the injury happened because of Kaya, and that she should be the one to be next to him?

‘.....Simpleton.’

Rather than being considerate of the other, it meant that she was conceding what was hers. And conceding also meant that every time she did that, she would lose something that could have become hers. Chloe was accustomed of that life since small: conceding, consideration, and loss.

Perhaps, her environment could have helped shape that kind of character. Being gentle meant that you had to be wary of the others. Chloe could only be like that since small. The Asian blood inside of her and her looks made it difficult for her to blend in. She wasn't white, nor was she from China.

Perhaps, if she had looked less gorgeous, she would really have been excluded. But fortunately, Chloe had quite a pretty face. At the same time, she knew how to look at her surroundings. She didn't make others feel displeased, and through consideration they had never thought of it, she made a good image. People that didn't know her would simply think that she had a good temperament, but that was her way of struggling... struggling to not get hated.



When she didn't feel tired of that kind of life, Chloe felt that she had forgotten who she was, what she wanted to have and what kind of life she wanted. People liked the gentle and good side of her, but Chloe couldn't like herself.

She didn't want to lose it this time, and didn't want to get it stolen. But of course, she couldn't get something stolen when it wasn't even hers..... If she had some chances left, she wanted to take them all. That was her honest feelings. It was at that moment.

“Did you finish exercising.”

At the blunt voice she turned to look, and Anderson was looking at her. Chloe wiped off the sweat in her forehead.

“I can finish it if I want to. But why?”

“We have to go to see Kaya and Minjoon.”

“.....Right. I will come after washing for a bit.”

“You.”

Chloe's feet stopped. Anderson looked at her with dry eyes.

“If you are going to keep putting that agonized face, why don't you clash with her?”

Chloe just looked at Anderson's eyes. And as she saw those eyes, she could vaguely guess what he was talking about. Chloe laughed

bitterly.

“I’m saying that I’m hiding it, but everyone gets to know it. Is it really that obvious?”

“It can only be so. Do you know how brightly you smile when you get next to him? It’s obvious. Whether it’s fake, it can only be obvious. That’s that.”

“Rather, if it was fake.....No, nothing. I will take back those words. I wanted something fake, but not anymore.”

Chloe smiled pathetically. Anderson put on a disagreeing face and said with a mean voice.

“Then stop putting that sad face. Why are you already acting like a loser?”

“.....Will I be able to win?”

Anderson frowned.

“Why are you asking me?”

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The life in the hospital room ended in one night. And all the time they were there, Kaya kept by his side. For her, it could have been responsibility and perhaps guilt. No, the probabilities of it being the case was high. Whether it was directly or indirectly, it was true that because of her, Jo Minjoon ended with an injury.

He told her that there's no need to be sorry, that it wasn't the fault of anyone and it was just an accident, but Kaya didn't reply back at those words. Kaya grabbed Jo Minjoon's arm. Jo Minjoon replied with his face shaking.

"I got an injury on my neck, not my legs. There's no need to help me."

".....Thinking about it, you are right. Do you have enough energy?"

"Do I even have to have a big amount of energy? At least, I have enough to walk."

After he said that, Kaya let go of Jo Minjoon's arm. Anderson, who brought his car to the parking lot, waved his hand. And in the seat next to him, Chloe was seated. Jo Minjoon put on a sorry face.

"There was no need for you to come all the way here."

"Shut up. Patients should shut their mouths."

Anderson replied with a cynical voice. Jo Minjoon laughed awkwardly. Chloe lowered the window of the car and stucked her upper body outside of it. A smile appeared in her face.

"Get on quickly! Let's go on an excursion."

".....Excursion?"

"How long will the four of us be together? Let's play what we have to when we have the time. If it isn't in this opportunity, it's difficult to even get out of Grand Chef's house. We have already

packed the lunch box.

At Chloe's words, Jo Minjoon laughed bitterly. He had realized that now, only four people remained. That meant that they had survived well until now, but it also meant that the dreams of others got shattered. But of course, the satisfaction and happiness was bigger than the regret, but just because of that it wasn't that the regret disappeared.

Jo Minjoon, who just got in the car, looked outside of the window. That he felt a cold thing in his neck. As he got surprised and turned to look back, Kaya was placing her finger on Jo Minjoon's neck.

"What are you doing?"

"Measuring the temperature. They said that it was good to remove the gauze and gently press ice if the temperature raised."

"I'm fine."

"Stop bluffing just because you are a man. There's no one that can be fine after getting an injury. You wouldn't know if you had some muscles. But for someone as frail as you..."

".....I will exercise just because I feel it to be unfair."

Ignoring Jo Minjoon's unfair expression, Kaya turned her head. She looked at Chloe.

"Where are we going to go?"

"Michigan Lake. To somewhere without many people."

".....Hmm. The food?"

Chloe raised her hand instead of replying. A large lunch box was in her hands. Kaya nodded.

After parking the car at the lake, they got out. Just like what Chloe said, there wasn't that many people. They could see some people, but they were too far away so there was no need to be wary of them.

June. The weather was warm. Jo Minjoon took off his shoes. The feeling of the warm sand that got between the fingers of the barefoot was quite good. And because of the sand or the sun, it wasn't really that cold even when they only had a shirt on them.

"I don't like the feeling of the sand."

Kaya frowned and grumbled. Kaya opened her eyes roundly.

"You don't like the feeling? I come here just to step on the sand."

"I wonder. I feel like small bugs walk between my feet."

Kaya trembled. However, there wasn't even a place near the lake that had grass. Rather than being a lake, it was more like a beach. In the end, they could only sit in a flat sandbox.

And it was at that moment when they opened the lunch box. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth and let out an exclamation.

“This.....Is kimbap?”

It wasn't even norimaki. Looking that it also smelled of sesame oil, it was entirely a Korean kimbap. Chloe replied while smiling embarrassedly.

“I thought that after getting injured, you would start missing food of your home town. But what kind of Korean food should I make? I heard that you made it with Anderson last time, so I got the help of Anderson and made it together.”

“.....Thank you.”

Jo Minjoon said while putting a face as if he had truly been moved. There were others thing in the lunch box and not only kimbap. Sandwich, chinese fries, steamed dumplings, salad, fruit, etc. It wasn't specially splendid, but it couldn't get better for a lunch box. The sandwich that contained raw ham, cheese, avocado, etc. wasn't that magnificent, but it had a full flavor; and the fries and the dumplings had a crunchy and a sticky feeling, you would immediately know that it was handmade. Kaya chewed the dumpling and opened her mouth.

“This much..... all.....how.”

“Speak after you chew it all.”

Jo Minjoon covered Kaya's mouth and scolded her. Kaya opened her eyes thinly and finished gulping the dumpling.

“How did you make all of these things? Wasn't it difficult? These

are all things that require hard work.”

“How hard can it be to go on a vacation?”

As they got full, the conversation they shared became deeper and heavier. Jo Minjoon asked.

“What kind of restaurant do you want to open? Anderson, you will surely want to inherit the restaurant from your parents, right?”

“I’m half and half. Before, I used to think like that, but as more time passed, my thoughts are changing. It will also have some meaning continuing the work of my parents..... but people are normally like that. Rather than continuing something another one started, they would like better to start something on their own.”

“I understand what you are talking about.”

Chloe nodded. The feeling of inheriting a restaurant from someone else would only be weak. But of course, some may prefer leaving something with big value rather than maintaining the existence of the family’s occupation.

She looked at Jo Minjoon.

“Minjoon, what kind of restaurant do you want to open?”

“.....Saying the truth, I have never properly thought about that. I only thought that I wanted to become a chef. I still haven’t decided as to what kind of chef I’m planning to become, [Fusion](#), Italian, or Spanish... I still don’t know about that. So knowing what kind of restaurant I want is difficult. Well.....”

Jo Minjoon scratched his nose as if it was embarrassing.

“I have thought about this. In a restaurant with at least 5 tables, cook when the customers order. It’s quite romantic. Accumulating regular customers, and that tranquil feeling. However, me working in that kind of place won’t happen.”

“.....Why?”

“Because excluding the romance, nothing remains. Perhaps you could think that i’m materialistic.....But I want to climb to the highest part of this world. I will tell you honestly. I want to become a chef in a luxurious restaurant. Just like Rachel Rose from Rose Island, and like Joseph the judge. To the highest place.”

Perhaps, some people may just focus on give the food a good flavor. And of course, that was a basic thing that should always be fulfilled. Only, satisfaction was the problem. Because the skills of a chef that works in a cheap restaurant is the same to that of one that works in an expensive one. Only, the value of the ingredients will be included in the amount of money.

So every time you went to an expensive restaurant, the customers could only be more sensitive and sharp than ever. It was easy to compare it with your family. They wouldn’t impede you from practicing cooking with a cheap ingredient like egg, but in the case you wanted to make something with high quality ingredients like lobster or cow tongue they would impede you, because it was a really precious ingredient to entrust it to that child.



Jo Minjoon wanted to become a chef that you wouldn't even need to hesitate to give him any kind of ingredients. He wanted to climb to the place where all the world would acknowledge him, and no one would doubt about the flavor.

Then, Kaya opened her mouth.

"I don't want that."

".....What?"

"Dividing it as high and low class. Even so, how much of a difference would there be? I..... Just want to open a restaurant that everyone can go to. Not a restaurant that you can only look at it and be envious of..... A restaurant that anyone can come. A place where not only pigs with money, but also poor bastards can go to."

Realistically speaking, it was difficult. Operation fees, ingredient fees, and the most basic thing, personal expenses. Taking into account all of those things, you could only give up on opening a good restaurant. And thinking about Kaya's skills, he thought that it would be too wasteful. Chloe coughed with an 'ahem'.

"Recently, I got one."

"What?"

"What kind of restaurant I want to inaugurate. So this. I....."

Chloe just touched the sand as if it was embarrassing to say. Just as her flushed cheek, the red sand started to stick in her hands like flour. Her shy sight directed at Jo Minjoon for a moment, and then

again at the lunch boxes.

“I want to do it just like Anderson’s parents. It was a couple’s restaurant? Me too..... I want to do that with the person I love.”

## Chapter 94: Four People, Four Dreams (2)

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The moment he saw Chloe's eyes, he imagined one thing in his head. His eyes sharpened. Maybe? If you were a man, you couldn't help but to imagine useless things. However, Jo Minjoon tried to deny that fact. Chloe was gentle and warm with anyone. If he misunderstood her, that would be the worst and meanest thing.

Kaya slightly opened her mouth.

“So where are you going to open that restaurant?”

“I don't know about that. I wonder if it will change according to the situation.”

“Even so, won't it be in the US?”

“Probably. If you don't become as good as Rachel and Joseph to the point of creating branches in other countries.....I don't think that you will be going to another. Ah, is Jo Minjoon's situation a little different?”

Chloe slightly looked at Jo Minjoon and asked. Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. Looking that she was asking him that lightly, he thought that what he felt before was just a misunderstanding.

“There's a high probability for me to go to Korea.”

“Come to the United States. I told you to immigrate.”

“.....Why are you so obsessed about immigration nowadays? I think that you are saying that word a lot more.”

At his words, Kaya just looked at him fiercely without saying anything. Instead of replying, she began to eat a sandwich until her mouth exploded. Chloe could vaguely know the reason as to why Kaya was acting like that, and faintly smiled. She said with a calm voice.

“It seems that Kaya is worried about you being in Korea?”

“What? What about that?”

“First, it’s a ceasefire country. Regardless of how reality is, it could be seen as a dangerous place in Kaya’s’ eyes.”

At her words, Jo Minjoon let out a deep sigh. The feeling you got when you saw it from the inside and the outside could only be different, but he wondered if she should worry this much. Kaya thought that this was the opportunity and said with a serious face.

“Get a job in an American restaurant. They said that it was possible to get a citizenship if you work anywhere for a few years.”

“.....Kaya. Thank you for worrying, but the situation you are thinking about is completely different. There’s not even one person in Korea that worries because war might happen.”

“I do worry.”

Silence flowed for a moment. Only then did Kaya realise that it could be heard in a different way. However, she didn’t try to change words. Because it was true that she worried about him. Anderson made invidious remarks.

“The poor wife stepped out.”

“You will get beat up. Shut your mouth.”

“Oh my! Your mouth is that of a rough poor wife.”

Even at Kaya's threat while holding the fork, Anderson didn't stop. Kaya glared at Anderson for a moment and then smirked and shrugged her shoulders. Anderson frowned. However, Kaya didn't look at Anderson anymore. It was an attitude as if it wasn't worth arguing with him.

“Anyways, Minjoon, think about it. Aside from war occurring, you have much more popularity in the US. You also said it before with your own mouth that you wanted to become a chef that wanted to succeed. Then, there would be nowhere better than here?”

“I know that but.....In the first place, isn't it a problem to worry about after looking at the results of Grand Chef?”

“Why worry about the results? Victory is mine, anyways.”

At Kaya's words, Anderson's eyes became fierce.

“I can't just let those words pass. That you are able to beat me?”

“You, did you get 9 points?”

At Kaya's words, Anderson's face froze like rock. Kaya smirked and said.

“I got 9 points. At the On the Lake restaurant. Minjoon told me directly. And was it buffet for Chloe? She got it then, but you didn't get it.”

“.....Don’t get proud of yourself because of something you got by luck. And his scoring isn’t an absolute thing.”

“Acting like that when you couldn’t even get 9 points from that absolute thing. You aren’t even lucky. Then stop acting strong and just stand still.”

Anderson’s mouth trembled. He stood up from that place.

“I’m going to the car.”

“Endure it Anderson. Kaya’s a kid. You should understand her.”

“I don’t like it. Kids.”

Even after Jo Minjoon held him back, Anderson left the place without even looking back. Kaya pouted her lips and grumbled.

“Kids also don’t like you.”

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“Do it slowly. Slowly.”

“Don’t exaggerate.”

Kaya’s hand was directed to the gauze in Jo Minjoon’s neck. She was putting a more nervous face than him. Along with her careful hand movements and the peeling of the gauze, the skin got pulled. Kaya let out a sigh.

“Even so, the blister seems to have subsided a bit.”

“Because it’s already been a week.”

Jo Minjoon replied while frowning. He could feel that his neck was trembling because it took air in a long while. Kaya slowly put her hand on his shoulder. Her soft palm was also trembling.

“It hurt, right?”

“I told you that there’s no need for you to feel sorry.”

“I’m not feeling sorry but worry for you.”

“There’s not even a need to do that. It’s something that already happened. It doesn’t even hurt now.”

“The scar, will it remain?”

At that question, even Jo Minjoon couldn’t reply quickly. The doctor had said that it was going to be difficult to not leave a scar. He forced a laugh and said.

“It’s nothing bad for a man to have a glorious scar.”

“.....I’m sorry.”

“I told you that there’s no need to feel sorry.”

Every time he looked at Kaya’s weak side, he felt a strange feeling. To him, she was a strong and perfect idol. But every time she acted like a girl, it seemed like she had opened her heart to him.

“But did you think about it?”

“.....Is it talk about immigration again?”

“You said that you were going to think about it last time.”

“It’s not something to think about in just a few days. I have to think about it hardly.”

“My sister liked you.”

It came out of nowhere. Jo Minjoon looked at her as if telling her what did she mean. Kaya shrugged her shoulders and opened her mouth.

“Mom also liked you. She said you were nice.”

“.....But why are you saying that so suddenly?”

“What about your family? They don’t say anything about me?”

“I wonder. They ask me somethings, but we aren’t the type to talk on the phone for a long time. Well..... They ask me that... If we aren’t really dating.”

“And what did you tell them?”

Kaya sharpened her eyes and looked at him. Jo Minjoon forced a laugh.

“What could I have told them? It’s obvious. I told them as it really is.”

“So, what’s that reality?”

Jo Minjoon raised one brow? Kaya opened her eyes intensely as if what was he looking at.



“No, I’m just asking. I’m curious.”

“I told them that you were a close friend. You aren’t going to say anything now if I say that you are my friend, right?”

“.....I’m not, anymore.”

Kaya replied with a sullen voice and replied. She smacked her lips for a moment and continued saying.

“They didn’t say anything about Chloe?”

“I wonder. We didn’t particularly appear together in the broadcast. You and I became ‘together’ so much it is strange.”

“What’s that strange thing?”

Jo Minjoon stood up from the place. Kaya, who was twisting her legs, hurriedly stood up and staggered. Jo Minjoon grabbed Kaya’s arm.

“Do it calmly. Look at Chloe, how feminine she is.”

“So you are comparing me right now? Then you, too, become more masculine. I told you to grow some muscles.”

“I am. I’m going to the gym now.”

“You are going after one week.”

“.....I couldn’t go because of the injury. Stop with the rebuking. In the first place, it isn’t that different.”

“But you aren’t that bulked.”

Jo Minjoon shut his mouth tightly. The moment he got in the gym, Anderson that looked at them sent an absurd sign.

“Did you fight?”

“Why are you asking that so suddenly?”

“Because you clearly have faces that you have fought.”

Jo Minjoon just shrugged his shoulders instead of replying. Chloe wiped off the sweat on her forehead and drank some water.

“There’s not much time until we are together. Let’s spend the time in a good way.”

“Now that you say it like that, I got depressed.”

“Heehee, sorry.”

Chloe’s cheek was tightly raising the corner of her mouth. Anderson opened his mouth.

“The semifinals must be a team mission, right?”

“Probably.”

“Now that I see, last time Martin said something that worsened my mood.”

“What did he say?”

Kaya replied.

“That there will be an unexpected event. So don’t be scared.”

A plane was flying over Michigan Lake and heading to Chicago. If you owned a plane, people would of course think about romantic things. Travel, international CEO... and if that wasn't it, just the truth of being up in the air made you envious.

However at this moment, Rachel Rose wasn't feeling even a bit of that romance. The reason of it could be confirmed with her eyes, nose, and ear. It was because of the old man in front of her. A white man that seemed like a bear, with brown hair mixed with blonde and a beard with similar colour, was eating the flight meal in a flurry way. A private plane. That wealthy and luxurious word lost all colour as he was eating his meal.

“Serguei. If you are a chef, have some manners about food. You are the same from back then.”

“Burp, don't act that noble. Why? As you age, you want to act more noble? What to do. I can't seem to do something that makes me puke. In the first place, it isn't so delicious as to respect the manners.”

The rough and thick voice let out a Russian English words. Rachel hesitated for a moment and then put a piece of biscuit in her mouth. Thinking about the dishes she was going to face in a little while, it was a stupid thing to fill their belly, but looking at how Serguei was eating, she got hungry for nothing. Now that she had aged, she didn't feel that hungry. But was it because she was next to a huge eater? She slowly melted the biscuit in her mouth and said.

“What about the food? You should feel thankful that a flight meal is this much. And not changing after you age is an embarrassing thing, but still acting like a brat after you have aged is even more embarrassing.”

“Ha, Beethoven and Gogh were also brats. Being resolute isn’t a flaw for artists.”

“Beethoven and Gogh didn’t age as much as you.”

Serguei didn’t refute back and grabbed a handful of salad. It wasn’t with a fork, but with chopsticks. Rachel looked at the thing that was in the chopsticks and smirked and said.

“There’s nothing better than a chopstick to grab a big amount of food at once. You can’t use things like fork because it’s stingy.”

“You really.....How could you become a chef?”

“How would I? I became one because I like to eat.”

Gulp. Rachel, looking at the amount of salad that should make you difficult to even feel the flavor, put a sickened face. For that man to be the representative of the famous ‘Season Madbadge’ that was comparable to Rose Island. Among young chefs, even the rough looks of Serguei may seem manly and respectful but..... It was a scene which Rachel couldn’t comprehend.

“So, what are you planning? After that old man Daniel died, you were also hiding like a retard.”

“.....You still couldn’t fix that bad habit of yours of saying exactly the things you think.”

“It’s the truth. The only perfect thing of that guy was certainly

cooking..... But at the same time he was a perfect fool. So you it's true that you are a retard for becoming depressed because that one bastard died.”

As he said it as if it was really obvious, she didn't even get angry. Rachel said with a sickened voice.

“There's a child that got in my eyes. ....Lower your pinky. If you keep acting that shallow, I can also get mad.”

“Hehe..... I want to see nature of the great Rachel Rose in a long while.”

“It's because you act like this that your wife keeps calling me.”

“What? Saying what?”

“It's a basic thing to make the contents of the consultation a secret. So keep that smelly mouth of yours shut. The broadcast, did you watch it?”

“I didn't even have time to eat, so would I have time to watch it? Ah, are you talking about that guy? The one who had an absolute sense of taste?”

Rachel nodded. Serguei nodded as if it was understandable.

“I know why you are interested, so how are his skills?”

“I still don't know well. I will know it today.”

“He should get nervous. There's nothing more bothersome than to match the sense of taste of an old hag.”

“He will be able to.”

“How are you that certain?”

Rachel's eyes became calm.

“Because if he's not able to, I'm planning to make that capability myself and make him grab it.”

## Chapter 95: Four People, Four Dreams (3)

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When the private plane arrived at the airport, the first person Rachel and Serguei encountered was Martin. Serguei smirked.

“Even so, this friend doesn’t seem to be ill-mannered.”

“.....I told you to mind your words.”

Rachel started to walk a distance away from Serguei as if she was embarrassed. Considering that it was a conversation from two elders filled with wrinkles, it was certainly a childish and affectionate one. Martin held the hands of the two of them with a face full of laughter.

“You have come a long way. It’s really an honor to see you.”

“What honor? Since when did Americans start to talk this unfamiliarly?”

“At the name of Serguei and Rachel, there’s nothing to be unfamiliar at this much consideration.”

Martin smirked and replied. It wasn’t an exaggeration to flatter, but he really felt like that. Their two names had their own meanings. Serguei wasn’t a person that could be seen that much in a broadcast, and nothing could be said about Rachel. However, the number of viewers that missed them in the US was countless. Just how big of a reaction was it when Rachel showed herself, even a moment, in the food truck mission?

He was already dying of excitement as to what kind of reaction

would this broadcast make. His thoughts was appearing on his face because it was something that wasn't even needed to hide. Serguei caressed his beard and said.

“By the way, It has been a while since I've been to Chicago...”

“I'm sorry, but the time for the mission.....”

“Ah, I understand. But there's no need to take that posture because I only act like a son of a bitch in front of two kind of people. First, bastards that cook like dog shit. Second, people that eat delicious food like dog shit. You aren't a chef, and still didn't become a bastard of a customer of mine. So..... Ah! What are you doing!”

“If you aged, act accordingly.”

Serguei patted his shin that got kicked and frowned.

“This crazy old hag.....! I came because you begged me to come!”

“I didn't ask you to embarrass me.”

“There's no answer for that jerk. No answer. Hey! I'm also getting on my seventies! If my bones break, it won't even reattach well!”

“If it breaks from the kick of a woman, it's about the same. Stop saying poor words. Because I get tired of receiving all of it. Martin. Let's go. Where's the car?”

“Ah, it's over there.”

Martin led the way like a courteous waiter. The car he had prepared was a wide van, but as Serguei got in it, it didn't seem that wide because he was tall and quite sturdy. After looking at the



airport that was getting farther away from outside the window, Serguei opened his mouth.

“So, how many people did you say that remained?”

“It’s four. Should I explain them?”

“Simply please.”

“Yes.”

Martin showed some photos to Rachel and Serguei. He opened his mouth with a calm voice.

“First, I will explain about Jo Minjoon. He’s famous among the viewers for having an absolute sense of taste, and his skills are fine overall. At first, he had some lacking points compared to the other three, but looking at how he is improving, you wouldn’t know how it would turn out. And Anderson Rousseau.....”

“I vaguely know about that guy. I’m acquainted with his parents. He’s a promising one. Explain the other participants. Simpler than before.”

“Yes. Then, I will explain about Chloe Jung. She seems to have learnt cooking from her mother, and cooks Chinese food well. In the case of Kaya Lotus, she doesn’t only cook national dishes, but instead of cooking luxurious things she gives the feeling that she is specialized in family meals. She seems to have learnt cooking by watching how the people in the market cooked.....”

“Wait.”

Serguei raised his hand. He frowned as if he had heard something strange.

“She learned by watching? Is that possible?”

“That..... She’s really outstanding in that side. When she appeared in the eliminating phase, she grilled eel and left a deep impression on the people.”

“Hmm..... There should be nothing to see about her skills, right? Wasn’t it luck? Even if they cooked in the market, it should only be things that was applied with barbecue sauce or seasoned it with salt. If it’s Italian or Spanish cooking, you just fry some rice and serve it. Isn’t it normally like that?”

“Actually, at first, she was picked as the strongest winning candidate. And in reality, she acted like that expectation. But now, as the other people are also growing, the feeling isn’t as overwhelming as before. But there’s a saying that she is a genius.”

“Genius.”

Serguei touched his beard and fell in his thoughts. After a while, he looked at Kaya.

“Perhaps Kaya, isn’t that girl more suited than that Jo Minjoon guy? Rachel. I’m talking about the talent you are looking for. She’s a kid that grew in the market with nothing.”

“That’s the same for Minjoon. And he also has the absolute sense of taste.”

“Hmm. I wonder. The market is a place where you can acquire many cooking cultures, but at the same time, your tongue may be unable to get accustomed at the low quality food..... In my eyes, it’s more charming than the absolute sense of taste.”

At his words, Rachel looked at Kaya’s picture with surprised eyes.

Although she was covered in Jo Minjoon's shadow, listening to Serguei's words, she started to think that the cat-like girl may be a pearl that's covered with mud.

“I will have to check for now.”

“What's there to check about? You will know it after you try their dishes today...”

Serguei's mouth was roughly contorted.

“...if it's delicious or not.”

—

The director told them that the mission was going to start tonight. Kaya slowly erased the eyeline while standing in front of the mirror.

Some may think that the surrounding of the eye may become black, but as the make up in her eyes disappeared, the person that was reflected in the mirror wasn't the fierce Kaya Lotus. The freckles in her nose, and the black pupils that are hidden in the sky blue iris. Her thin and light coloured lips. Her nose was pointy, and her eyes weren't that deep. If you walked on the streets, she would be a pretty and vivid female student. She gave that feeling.

‘.....Let's just apply some lotion.’

Kaya carefully applied lotion in her face. She was confident on the size of her face, so only a drop of lotion was enough to cover all of her face. 'It's a good thing economically.' Kaya put on a satisfied smile and turned back.

As she got out of her room, she only saw Chloe in the hall. Kaya, who saw Chloe's face, just started to touch her cheek for nothing. Chloe's skin was really smooth. She couldn't see freckles or blemishes. She did have some moles, but people that didn't have it would be rarer. The sunshine that came from the window clearly reflected Chloe's cheek.

Kaya gulped down the envy and asked.

"The guys still aren't out?"

"They seem to be doing their hair."

"Just how flowery are they going to make it....."

An awkward silence flowed. The reason was obvious. Because they could only worry about the mission that was soon going to approach. A sigh flowed between Chloe's lips.

"It would be good if there was no mission."

"If there's no mission, you can't win."

"If I was to choose between winning and maintaining this moment..... I may pick the latter."

At Chloe's words, Kaya repeated opening and closing her mouth. In the end, when those hard words came out from her mouth,

Kaya couldn't properly look at Chloe.

“.....Actually, I'm also like that.”

Chloe looked at Kaya with surprised eyes. She did know that she had opened up, but even so, it was still the first time she had expressed herself. A smile appeared in Chloe's mouth, but it disappeared as quickly. Kaya didn't look that bright. She opened her mouth after hesitating for a moment.

“I, it's the first time I pass this relaxed moments. I'm sorry for my mother and my sister, but I usually had it hard. It was heavy. But here, I can act as a sloppy girl, and I don't have to worry about tomorrow's meal. And..... the people.”

Kaya shut her mouth, but you could guess what she was going to say even if you didn't hear it. Chloe extended her hand and grabbed Kaya's hand. Kaya didn't refuse.

“Don't worry. From now on, you will be able to keep doing it. And regardless of the mission, you can just see me. You aren't planning on seeing me?”

“.....Will I be able to? Honestly speaking, we live far away, and we will get busier. Will we..... be able to?”

“If you have the heart, we are meant to see each other. And I.....”

Chloe extended her fist. “It reached.” At those words, Kaya hesitated for a moment, and slowly extended hers too. Bump. The moment the fist touched the other fist, Kaya coughed and leaned

on the wall. With her character, this was certainly embarrassing. Chloe laughed cheerfully. Anderson and Jo Minjoon got out of the room.

“Ah, you were already out.”

“You’re late.”

Chloe blew her cheeks. Kaya looked at Jo Minjoon and smirked.

“You didn’t even decorate much. Why did you get so late?”

“My hair is straight so it kept getting disheveled. So I just washed it again.”

“You should have just come out. I like disheveled hair.”

“If you saw me, you won’t be able to say those words.”

At Chloe’s words, Jo Minjoon shook his head. The four of them moved towards the kitchen. They wanted victory, but they didn’t like to part ways. And those feelings showed in their slow moving speed. In front of the kitchen, the four of them stopped walking as if they had agreed beforehand. Jo Minjoon looked at his sides. As they looked at each other’s faces, they opened their mouths as if they had something to say, but shut it again. Kaya opened her mouth. It was a low voice.

“Let’s go.”

Compared to usual, the judges were already waiting in the kitchen. Jo Minjoon glanced at his surroundings. He heard that there was going to be a shocking event, but he couldn’t see

anything special. Joseph opened his mouth.

“Have you been well?”

“It was a good time.”

“I will pray for today to also become a good day. But of course, for one person, this day may never be pleasant.”

Jo Minjoon shut his mouth. The nervousness he was forgetting about was pressing his chest. Passion, fear, expectation. Those many feelings beat inside his heart.

“Before revealing the mission, we will do a simple game. It’s drawing straws.”

Alan extended his fist. And over his fist, a few pieces of papers were on it.

“Three are marked with an X and only one with an O. And the person that picks the O will be given the right to pick their teammate.”

Team mission. As only 4 remained, they thought that it will obviously turn out that way. Chloe went out first. And the moment she pulled the piece of paper, it turned out that the other three didn’t have the need to move. Because at the end of the paper, was the letter O written in it. Chloe put on an awkward smile. Because picking one also meant that you wouldn’t be able to pick two.

“Choose your teammate. Chloe.”

“Ah, yes. Wait a moment.”

At the urging of the judges, Chloe continued thinking inwardly. No, actually, the person she desired was clear. The problem was if their combination would be suitable. However the longer she thought, the thing that grew was the emotional part. It may be the last time. For the adversary, or for her. So thinking like that, the choice became easier. Chloe opened her mouth.

“Minjoon. Will you go together with me?”

Jo Minjoon got surprised at that moment, but softly laughed and nodded. However, there were more people that were really surprised. Chloe teaming up with Jo Minjoon wasn't the problem. Kaya was looking at Anderson, and Anderson was looking at Kaya. As they were both exchanging astringent gazes, the two of them were thinking the same thing.

‘Me..... With him/her?’



## Chapter 96: Four People, Four Dreams (4)

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The relationship between Anderson and Kaya was vague. Actually, if expressed in Korean, it would be ‘disliking affection’ rather than ‘vague’. The feeling between them was just that, because when they saw each others’ faces everyday, they would grow a sort of affection. And it was no different because it was the two of them.

However the disliking affection was, in the end, a disliking affection. When they were together they argued, and at least one of their faces would contort every time. If there was a difference of a hating relation, it was that even after they fought like that, they still looked at each other.

“.....Why is it you?”

“That’s something I want to say.”

Compared to them that were faring a psychological warfare, Jo Minjoon and Chloe were really peaceful. It was obvious, but there was no reason for their relation to be bad. Jo Minjoon smirked and asked Chloe.

“Did you aim for it?”

“What?”

“Anderson and Kaya. It was obvious that if you gathered the two of them, they would become a explode.”

“Ah..... I couldn’t think up to that point.”

Chloe looked at them with depressed eyes. Alan raised his voice and said.

“Since the team had been decided, wear your aprons. Chloe and Minjoon, you are the Red Team. Anderson and Kaya, you are the Blue Team.”

As soon as they wore the apron, Alan continued saying.

“Now, I will explain this mission’s key factor. Today, guests that you wouldn’t even have imagined will come. At the same time, they will become your judges. They are people that many people around the world admire and take them as role models.”

“On top of that, I am also one of the people that’s working hard to follow their example.”

Looking at Joseph’s way of talking, Jo Minjoon’s and the faces of the other three became weird. If you were on the level of Joseph, you could say that you have succeeded to a certain amount, and that he was a world class chef that had accumulated a lot of experience. But that Joseph was showing respect for them? They couldn’t guess what kind of outstanding people was going to come.

‘They aren’t chefs?’

If it was a completely different area, it was understandable. But would those kind of people be able to take the role of judges? He got that question.

However, that suspicion was for nothing. The next moment, Emily yelled the name of these people.

“There are two guests that came to Grand Chef’s house today. Chef Rachel Rose and Chef Sergei Dmitry Mikheyev.”

‘It seems like it became a host show.’

At the strange feeling, when Emily was putting a self mocking smile, the door of the kitchen opened and two people entered: Rachel and Sergei. Sergei smirked and approached Kaya.

“They say you came from the market?”

“.....That’s right.”

“I also grew up in the market! So I know really well as to what kind of fucked up place it was. That’s why I think you are really skilled to have climbed all the way here. How about it? May I look at your hand?”

Kaya sharpened her eyes, and let out a sigh and extended her hand. Even so, for an old man to act like that, it was hard to act harshly. Sergei looked at Kaya’s hand with serious eyes, and tried to kiss at her hand. Kaya took out her hand and looked at him with cold eyes.

“What are you doing right now?”

“.....Don’t Americans kiss on the hand?”

“At least, there aren’t many that say that they are looking at their hands and try to kiss it.”

Kaya said with a blunt voice. Sergei rolled his eyes and fell back awkwardly.

Rachel, who was looking at the two of them, grabbed her forehead (PR: facepalmed) and let out a sigh. There wasn't a case that could be passed silently. Jo Minjoon fell into another thought.

‘Who is he?’

For Jo Minjoon, it could only be difficult to know of him. He would know if he was a famous Korean chef, but how would he know about a famous Russian chef? If he had a branch in the US, he would be quite famous.....but at least, it was a name he heard for the first time. He didn't have any memories of having seen his face. Rachel pulled Sergei's arm.

“Don't make me embarrassed and come here quickly.”

“No, why this.....”

Sergei was putting an unfair expression while looking at Kaya. On the other side, Anderson was putting a really bright expression. It wasn't because the situation between Kaya and Sergei was a fun thing to watch, but because of Rachel's appearance. Although Sergei was an excellent chef and they were kind of acquainted, it was still different with Rachel because she was the role model he had admired since he was small.

On the other side, there was also someone who was looking at

Rachel and thinking about completely different things, Jo Minjoon. He looked at Rachel while thinking maybe. She came to find him at the food truck, and she even helped him on the broadcast on her restaurant in Chicago..... Now, she came as a judge?

But there was also the possibility of her coming to this program without any relation to Jo Minjoon. However Jo Minjoon knew by intuition that his influence wasn't that small on the reason Rachel was here right now.

‘Just what does she want from me?’

Was she simply trying to nurture a junior scholar with talent? If that was the case, he thought that there were a lot more talented people than him. Didn't Dave, who studied under her, made those delicious dishes in Chicago? Just because Jo Minjoon had an absolute sense of taste doesn't mean she couldn't be sure that he would make better food than that.

Rachel and Sergei stood next to the judges. They wondered if they were going to greet each other, but soon Joseph pointed at the two boxes in front of them.

“This is today's mission's ingredients. One of them has ingredients Chef Sergei prefers, and on the other one has ingredients Chef Rachel prefers. Each team will cook for one of the chefs, and the score will be given by the chef and us, judges.”

“We will reveal the boxes.”

Alan and Emily opened the lid of the box at the same time. Jo Minjoon sharpened his eyes and looked at the two boxes. In one side, it had cow, salmon, pig, buckwheat powder, chicken, etc. and in another it had onion, deer, salmon trout, various kind of cheeses, turkey, and fruits. Just looking at the contents, one could guess whose box it was. Buckwheat or giant crab were ingredients that suited to Russian cuisine, and on the other side, it gave an abundant feeling of the Northern and Southern parts of America.

“I believe that just looking at the boxes, you will vaguely know whose it is. Yes. This one is Sergei’s and this one is Rachel’s. The right to choose the box will be given to the Blue Team that couldn’t choose the team. Kaya and Anderson, pick a box.”

At Alan’s words, Kaya and Anderson looked at each other. He was putting on a disliking face and in the end, he loosened his expression and let out a sigh. He glanced at Rachel. He didn’t want to seem crude in front of the person he admired.

“I know that you don’t like me, and I also don’t like you much. But this is a mission. You know that we can’t act based on our emotions, right?”

“I know.”

“Good. Then let’s think. Sergei or Rachel. What box would seem better.”

Kaya closed her mouth and looked at the boxes. And then said with a calm voice.

“It doesn’t matter whatever side it is.”

“.....An amazing confidence.”

Now that it became like this, the right to choose became Anderson's. He looked at the boxes laborious eyes. Honestly speaking, he felt more inclined to choosing Rachel's box. It was an opportunity to show himself in front of the person he admired. Of course, he got the feeling that he wasn't ready yet, but he did have the heart to show her as to what kind of chef he had grown to.

However, he couldn't just decide things because of that. Honestly speaking, taking into account the fastidiousness of the ingredients, Sergei's side was more comfortable. But of course, in the case of the giant crab, it would be a pain to handle it, but if they had a know-how, it wasn't that difficult to do. But in Rachel's case, there were a lot of ingredients like deer that if you failed on the process for even a moment, it would smell fishy.

Originally, he would have challenged, but he thought that it was a childish thing to take that danger on a mission. Anderson said with a regretting voice.

“We will choose Chef Sergei's box.”

“It's unexpected. If it was you, I thought that you would choose teacher Rachel.”

At Alan's words, Anderson only put on an embarrassed face. There was no one here that didn't know that he chose the easy way. But for him to have the handicap to team up together with Kaya, at least it was like this for him, he thought that showing this much was fine.

And at that moment, Jo Minjoon and Chloe were frowning exactly the same and looked at Rachel's box. The moment they were going to properly design the recipe, Emily opened her mouth.

"Fine. Then the boxes got decide. You will have to make a three-course meal with the ingredients in these boxes for two hours. We will give you exactly 30 minutes to design your recipes. In that time, share your opinions." Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon. Jo Minjoon opened his mouth with a calm voice.

"Let's decide on the format for now. What are you planning to make for the main? If we are going to take some risks, I think that the deer or sheep would be good. Let's leave the salmon trout for the appetizer."

"I also think that it's good to use fish as an appetizer. Salmon trout ceviche should also be good. The main..... Sheep is more comfortable for me rather than deer.

"I'm also that way. I haven't handled deer meat that much. But for sheep.....But if we go with the simple method of sheep galbi, we will get some remarks for it being too monotonous. Being loyal to the basics isn't enough to face those two. It would be good if we gave a special point in the sauce or the garnish..... Why are you looking at me with that expression?"

"Hu, huh? It's nothing?"

Chloe was smiling merrily, and hurriedly put her expression in order. Jo Minjoon designing the recipe felt really cool, she couldn't say those words with her mouth.



‘It would be good if we don’t get eliminated. Me and Minjoon.’

Interpreting those words negatively, it would mean that she hoped for Kaya or Anderson to get eliminated. But she couldn’t do anything about it. She hoped for the two of them to survive until the end because her heart was telling her that. She suddenly remembered Kaya’s words, that when the competition ends, their relationship wouldn’t. As she felt touched by it, she replied that it wouldn’t happen.....

‘Can it really not end?’

She knew that there was nothing eternal in the world.....Even so, the time she spent in Grand Chef house was one of the happiest moments in her life. The start and the ending was already decided. She hated that, but just because she hated it, she couldn’t do anything about it. Chloe let out a sigh. Jo Minjoon flinched and opened his mouth.

“.....Was the thing I just said so-so?”

“No, no. You said that you were going to put anchovy cream in the sheep ribs, right? The cream, it would certainly be balsamic or lime juice?”

“Mmm..... I think that lemon should be better. There were a lot of fruits in the box. It will be better to use as much as possible. If we use lime, the aroma will turn out peculiar, and it will be covered by the anchovy’s flavor.”

“Fine. I think that it will turn out well.”

“.....Aren’t you accepting it all without any doubts? I can also make a mistake.

But of course, he had said all these things looking at the estimated cooking score. 8 points. Honestly, it was a superior and refined recipe, but even so he thought that Chloe was receiving it all too easily. He could only feel it to be strange. However, Chloe laughed softly and shook her head.

“I saw the dishes you have cooked until now. I believe in you. Aside from that, I thought that the recipe was fine.”

“.....Thanks.”

Honestly speaking, there was some uneasiness in the corner of his heart. He was the one that leveled to level 7 the latest among the ones that remained. Just because they were at the same level, it didn't mean that their skills were the same. That also meant that he was lacking compared to the other three. That's why he could only be happy when Chloe picked him because she was thinking that he was the best among the three.

However, in the case of Kaya and Anderson, the atmosphere was certainly different. Anderson opened his mouth while frowning.

“What do you want to make for the appetizer?”

“Ground beef stroganoff, separate it with a sieve, and present it as a soup. It's a dish that is basically thick of the basics, so it won't be awkward.”

“If you make the appetizer that heavy, just what are you planning to make for the main?”

“You can just make it with more weight and depth. It's not that difficult.”

“It’s not difficult, but it’s a risk. Why do I have to go through that risk?”

“Ha.....”

Kaya let out a sigh with a stifled face. It was also the same for Anderson. Sergei, who was looking at them, laughed as if it was funny.

“I can see all of the things you can see inside of a kitchen restaurant. That dabble Anderson, even if his character isn’t good, he has a strong character so he should take the initiative..... But since his adversary also have a strong character, he can’t do anything. It’s just like having two head chefs in one kitchen.”

“It isn’t so bad that there are two head chefs. The Rousseau couple are like that. The important thing is how much you trust and depend on each other. With that said, look at that kid Jo Minjoon and... was it Chloe Jung? Those two showed us quite a desireable sight.”

“Hmph, if you show that playing-house like atmosphere, although you wouldn’t know by the outside, you will slowly get more slacking. That’s how accidents happen. If you act with an overwhelming charisma like me, although people from below may think that it is difficult, in the end you can make a safe and perfect kitchen.”

“You don’t have charisma, but your character is showy.”

“Ha, I don’t think that it’s something I should be hearing from you. Just because I became an old man that retired from the main line, are you also planning on bringing up my old temperament.”

At Sergei’s words, Rachel’s wrinkles deepened. She glared at

Sergei as if she didn't like him, and then let out a sigh. Alan slightly said.

“Who does teacher think will win?”

“Is there losing and winning on cooking? But I wonder, if I have to name the team I'm expecting more, it's certainly the Red Team. Rather than because those kids are using ingredients I like.....Minjoon, it's because that kid is there.”

“I recognize that his sense of taste is sensitive.....But compared to the other participants, his cooking skills are more outstanding. Just why do you favor that kid that much? Last time, they said that you even asked Dave to help with the broadcast in the restaurant? Don't you originally do that?”

“Think about the shining stars Gogh drew. He expressed that still and quiet night sky in a dynamic way. He was able to draw that because of the way he saw the world. And the sight for an painter is the same as the sense of taste for a chef. Even after eating the same thing, he can feel what we can't. If that was possible, the story would change entirely. If it was a small difference, I wouldn't even be saying these things. However, if that difference is as different as having your eyes open and closed.....”

Rachel took in a deep breath. It seems like just bringing this up made her heart beat, and her voice that had aged, ironically rang like that of a girl's.

“One day, he will be able to make a piece that's so outstanding, it will make every other food on the world feel like fake.”

## Chapter 97: Four People, Four Dreams (5)

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If Jo Minjoon had heard this, he would feel both happy and sad at the same time. The ability he had was different to the absolute sense of taste. Fortunately, there was no way he would hear this. He didn't have the leisure to concentrate on other things that wasn't designing the recipe with Chloe.

“You want to make pudding for dessert?”

“Yes. Chestnut or almond pudding is fine. Vivid mango pudding will also be good.”

“How good must you make it to win with only a pudding? But I think that the harmony with the other dishes is fine.”

“Good. Then salmon trout ceviche, sheep galbi, and pudding. ....Thinking about it, we can garnish the almond pudding with fruits. How about simmering the fruits in honey water? Mango, orange, and peaches would be fine.”

“Peach is good. Ah, right. Avocado. We mix avocado and lime and make it as a sorbet.”

“Sorbet and ceviche. .... Good. Then, let's organize the roles.”

While Jo Minjoon was rolling his head, Chloe took a bite on an apple that was in the box. And laughed.

“I'm really hungry. I couldn't eat anything after exercising.”

“The judges are laughing.”

“What about it? It's the virtue of a chef to at least fill your belly more than usual.”

“It's too funny to be a virtue.”

Chloe didn't say anything back and just took one more bite. Smelling the faint aroma of the apple, Jo Minjoon opened his mouth.

“For now, there are three paths. To separate it by cooking, separate the roles of fire and knife, or if that's also not it, we act depending on the flow of the situation. If we can just do it, the last one would be the best.”

“Then let's do it like that.”

“To go with the flow?”

“Yeah. In the end, we just have to coordinate ourselves. We did a team mission before. I think that we will also be able to do it well this time.”

“Then, we separated it by dishes.....”

He had cooked twice with Chloe. However, they couldn't know how their coordination was with only that. In the end, Jo Minjoon nodded. Just like Chloe respected his opinion, he also wanted to respect hers. Chloe lent the apple.

“Want to eat?”

“.....Only a bite.”

Jo Minjoon took a bite on the apple. The refreshing feeling that spread in his mouth made his tired mind lighter. Chloe said while biting on the apple while seating on the countertop.

“How about it? Doesn't energy flow out?”

“It’s not up to there. But well, I got somewhat refreshed.”

“Where’s there? Now, think again. Still not confident?”

“This isn’t a magical apple.”

At his words, Chloe pouted her lips.

“You know that. The placebo effect. If you do believe, it really becomes like that. You too think like that. That we will really be able to coordinate. If you think like that, it will turn out well.”

“.....Fine, I will believe. Instead, if in the middle of it we don’t think we are coordinating that well, we would divide the roles immediately: one on the fire and the other one handling the ingredients.”

“Well, okay.”

“For now, I will check the ratio of the sauce or the pudding.”

“Good for me. For an absolute sense of taste to give me a feedback and all.”

“.....Fine, I will believe. Instead, if in the middle of it we don’t think we are coordinating that well, we would divide the roles immediately: one on the fire and the other one handling the ingredients.”

An awkward smile appeared on Jo Minjoon’s mouth. Chloe got weird thoughts. She thought that Jo Minjoon got uncomfortable when someone talked about his the absolute taste. If he was embarrassed to have that good ability, it was understandable. But thinking more deeply about it, she thought that the attention he got because of it would be bothersome. Chloe quickly said.

“It’s a good thing for a chef to get a feedback.”

“It’s not up to a feedback. And.....”

“It’s time! Everybody start cooking!”

“Turn the fire for now! I will bring the ingredients.”

Jo Minjoon quickly brought the ingredients he needed from the pantry and the box. Meanwhile, Chloe turned on the fire. Jo Minjoon was overwhelmingly fast in choosing the ingredients among the participants. It was logical to divide them like this.

Chloe quickly fried the almonds on the fire. Two hours. Honestly, it was enough to make a three course. It also meant that they weren’t planning on pressing them with time. Only, it meant that they would have to progress on cooking without any mistakes.

And for that, they had to correctly do the order. If there was limited time, it was obvious that they would have to first make dessert. People that didn’t know would think that the order of cooking it would be appetizer, main dish, dessert..... But there were many cases that dessert took most of the time. There was nothing to say about cake and cookies, and it was also hard to make pudding, jelly, ice cream, etc in a short time.

But of course, in the case of Chinese-style fried fruit, it didn’t take much. But at least, the almond pudding they were making right now, even if they made it quickly it could only last more than one hour.

“Minjoon.”



They didn't need to talk for long. Jo Minjoon quickly lent a bowl and received the almonds from the frying pan. Now, they had to grind it in the mixer and make it as a powder. Compared to the one that was sold in the markets, it would have some grains left, but they thought that it would be more charming that way.

Chloe put rice powder and milk in the bowl; mixed it; put almond powder, milk, and sugar in a saucepan; and started to boil it. Later, she had to mix the both things together, and had to move it again to the pan and boil it. They needed to keep stirring it for 30 minutes, so someone needed to keep being in front of the bowl.

“Minjoon. Anchovy cream.”

“Okay. You can do the sugar water to use in the ceviche sorbet at the same time, right?”

“Yes. Do the other ingredients yourself.”

They didn't need to talk for long. The coordination of Jo Minjoon and Chloe was surprisingly perfect. Actually, making one three-course meal wasn't that difficult, and the roles didn't get that mixed up..... But finding their own roles every time was quite a natural thing. On top of that, this was the first time they had properly coordinated in a mission.

Jo Minjoon peeled off the anchovies, and put it in olive oil and slowly started to heat it. When it started to melt, Jo Minjoon turned off the fire and seasoned it with salt and pepper. After pouring lemon juice, he removed the fishy smell. After that, putting it in the freezer was the end. He had to ferment it this way for a bit longer to deepen the flavor. If that was possible, making it one day before would have been better, but in this situation, they

couldn't make everything perfect.

As he slightly looked at Chloe, she was putting the sugar water for the avocado sorbet in the freezer while stirring at times, and stirring the lemon juice, lime juice, and avocado that was in the bowl, sloppily with her left hand. Jo Minjoon received that bowl and said.

“I will do it.”

“Whew, thanks.”

There were sweat drops on Chloe's forehead. Jo Minjoon took out a towel from his apron and wiped off the sweat. He remembered the past, no, perhaps it should be the future. The time he worked as the youngest in the restaurant, he had to wipe off the sweat of his sunbaes countless times.

“Don't force yourself. We aren't in such a hurry. Do it more relaxed.”

“.....It's because I don't want to be a bother to you.”

“You are doing it plentifully well.”

The eyes of the judges that were looking at the two of them could only be satisfied. Precisely speaking, only Sergei was an exception. He said with a voice as if it was boring.

“Not funny bastards. You have to clash, fight, and yell for it to be a kitchen.”

“Please, stop the bluffs Sergei. People that listen to you get more

tired.”

“You see this as a bluff?”

“Yeah. A bluff more pure than rock salt.”

At Rachel’s words, Sergei grumbled and rolled his eyes. For an old man that had the aura of a general, it was quite a frivolous expression. Rachel looked at Jo Minjoon and Chloe for a moment, and then looked at the other team. The reason Sergei talked well about Kaya Lotus. Only then did she start to see the points she couldn’t.

She was looking for the reason Sergei talked well about Kaya Lotus.

‘Her senses are frightening.’

At first glance, it may seem that she was just cooking roughly, but the timing of doing the seasoning or moving the pan was really close to art. Normal people would just see this as fast knife skills, or be amazed by the fire that surged up through the frying pan, but Rachel was a pro. Precise cooking at the exact moment. She knew better than anyone that that was the key point of cooking.

Kaya was showing that point really sophisticatedly. Anderson, who was next to her, was also the sophisticated type, but Kaya gave the feeling that she didn’t have anything to point out even compared to Anderson that had received elite education. For her to not have learnt anything, and just looked at how the amateurs cooked in the market, it was a really outstanding ability. There was a limit as to what she could learn from amateurs. In the end, that meant that she had grown on her own.

“By the way, those two are unexpectedly quiet. I thought that I would hear some yells.”

“Yeah. I’m also surprised right now.”

Unexpectedly, Kaya and Anderson didn’t make any discord. Although the temperament of the two was like fire, there was a reason they had to endure it right now. Although they have clashed a bit in the designing of the recipe, that was unavoidable. Because the philosophy of chefs couldn’t always be the same.

The fortunate thing was that Anderson had bent his stubbornness a bit. Was it because he didn’t want to show a petty side in front of Rachel? Alan opened his mouth.

“The Red Team must be in danger. It seems like one of the weak point the Blue Team had has disappeared.”

“Weak point?”

“Yes. Honestly speaking, Anderson and Kaya are the best among the remaining ones. It’s like that looking at their abilities. Although Chloe too is fine, I feel that there is a bit of uncertainty in her cooking. And I also acknowledge Minjoon’s potential, only that there’s still a long way until it’s completion.”

“So what’s the weak point?”

“Their character and the relation between the two of them. Honestly, the only ones that can receive Kaya’s temperament softly are only Minjoon and Chloe. If she teams up with one of the two you wouldn’t know, but if she doesn’t, Kaya isn’t a person many would want in their team. And nothing to say about if she teams up with someone like Anderson.”

“In the end, it was obvious that they would fight, so that was the weak point. Is that what you meant?”

“Yes. However, I don’t know why but it seems that they are died down their temperament. Anderson gives the feeling that he is calmer than usual..... Perhaps, it is because he is in front of victory that he has gotten more serious.”

After Alan finished his guess, the judges looked at the participants with interesting eyes. Who may be the one that presents a more excellent dish? Their expectation and heart beat could be heard.

The time was almost ending. The dishes Jo Minjoon and Chloe prepared were almost being completed. Sorbet made by mixing lemon and lime juice, lime zest, and avocado. Below that was meat portions of salmon trout the size of a dice that was simmered in a sauce made by mixing coriander, shallot, chili, rape seeds oil, lime juice, salt, sugar, and black pepper. Some leaves were placed between the pink-coloured salmon trout as decoration, and on top of that, the avocado sorbet that was placed was showing its unshapely, yet cute form.

The judges looked at that and gulped. Even if they ate a bite of that, how softly would it melt, and how delicious and sweet would that be. They couldn’t help but to expect that. Rather than a splendid plating, it seemed that they had exemplified ‘delicious-looking’ to the utmost.

They couldn’t help but feel excited about taking a bite of that, how softly would it melt and how delicious and sweet would that be.

The almond pudding was boasting a clean shape. Chloe put the almond pudding in a triangular-shaped wine cup, but the white and slippery pudding could be seen even through the glass. The only thing that was placed on top of the pudding was a few pine nuts, but even with only that, it gave a luxurious feeling.

The sheep galbi that was the main, rather gave a weaker feeling compared to the other two. The sheep galbi, that was dressed with roasted vegetables, anchovy cream, and wine dressing, was charming, but comparatively it wasn't that strong. Chloe placed the last dish, the sheep galbi, on the tray. It was the end. Chloe put a faint smile and turned to look at Jo Minjoon. Soon, they will get evaluated. Before that, she wanted to enjoy some leisure.

“You have done well. Chloe.”

“.....It's because of you.”

“I didn't do much“

“No, you have done much more than you think. For me. So thank you.”

Chloe extended her fist. Jo Minjoon looked at her fist for a moment and matched his. A warm feeling was felt the moment they touched each other. However, that heat couldn't melt down Jo Minjoon's nervousness, because he could see the score with his eyes.

He wanted a miracle, but at the end of their short battle, all of the dishes turned out to be 8 points. The cooking score isn't everything. He had always thought like that, but there was no time when the cooking score turned over the results.

That's why when he looked at Kaya's and Anderson's dishes, he didn't get courage. He was scared. The score 8 was a really good score, but he got the fear of being able to beat their opponents with just that.

That fear made him ignore their score, but at the same time it also made him curious. Perhaps, if it wasn't that good of a score compared to his fear, this nervousness would disappear. In the end of his struggling, Jo Minjoon turned his sight as if he got urged by someone. But, just like the results generated by that feebleness..... It was the same.

Chloe looked at Jo Minjoon. Was he so nervous and terrified that he couldn't even make a smile. And that's why when she looked at his face, she felt regret. She wanted to be his strength just like he heard all of her worries when she was troubled. She also wanted to become his enduring step.

Chloe extended her hand. Her small, slender, and warm hands rode on Jo Minjoon's shoulder.

"Don't tremble. I can accept the results whatever it is. We have done our best. We did well."

".....Yeah. Right."

The tasting began.

## Chapter 98: The Mirror Recipe (1)

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The judges took the food into their mouths. Jo Minjoon had never felt this nervous before. He could only feel this way since he was up against Kaya and Anderson. They were originally what should have been the winner and runner up.

Most of all, the thing that made him shrink was the score: 8 points, 9 points, and 7 points. By average, it was the same as them, but he couldn't know what the judges would like overall. But of course, it was difficult to say that getting 8 points in all of the dishes was only fairly good.....

The judges returned to their places after finishing tasting, and quietly started to converse. Joseph started.

“It's hard.”

That one sentence was showing the feelings of all of the people here. Actually in cooking, even if there is an overwhelming difference, personal tastes couldn't help but show, and picking on which was more delicious than the other was also difficult. You wouldn't know if they could see the cooking score..... Rachel opened her mouth.

“Just looking at the composition, the Red Team was better. The vivid salmon ceviche; the anchovy cream that catches the greasy feeling of the sheep galbi; and the almond pudding. On the other side, the composition of the Blue Team is a bit lacking. Starting with crab bisque; the main beef stroganoff with fried risotto; and



lastly, éclair with a lot of choux creme.....There's no point to rest."

"The problem is that it's strong."

Serguei said with a rough voice. He looked at the empty table with regretful eyes and continued speaking.

"It was so much I couldn't feel that sourness lacked. Excluding the dessert, it was all salty, but even so it wasn't painful for my mouth. But of course, it could be because I didn't eat a big amount of it, but even if I ate more spoons of it there won't be that much of a difference."

"In the case of beef stroganoff and fried risotto, it was really well harmonized. Perhaps if they hadn't fried the risotto and just served it, the dampness of both of the dishes would have made my mouth spoiled. But with only one process that's frying, they saved the flavor instantaneously. Honestly, from the dishes that appeared today, it was the one that suited my mouth the most."

"It was also like that for my mouth. Ah, this isn't because i'm Russian. I originally don't like beef stroganoff much. But this one was delicious."

If something you usually didn't like was handled by a real chef, it would transform to something delicious. And Anderson and Kaya had shown plenty of themselves being real chefs. Alan thought with a 'hm' and opened his mouth.

"But thinking about the dessert, it's a bit disappointing. The cream that was inside the éclair was fine, but the damp feeling of the dough wasn't enough."

“It’s not only that. If it’s only the flavor, it was really fine. But it’s a bit dubious as if the fried risotto and the beef stroganoff has the weight of a main.”

“I wonder. What’s an appropriate thing for a main dish. That’s something that isn’t clear even among chefs. I think that if it’s this much, we can let it pass.”

Even at Alan’s reply, Emily still had a vague expression. Joseph opened his mouth with a calm voice.

“If there was some disappointment, that can be solved through the votes. First, let’s proceed with voting. I think that making the participants nervous this much was enough.”

The judges approached the participants. Joseph said.

“Now we will all make one vote. Let’s start from Emily. Who are you going to choose?”

“I think that the course is one story. Having an introduction, development, turn, and conclusion is the best thing. In the case of the Blue Team, the food itself was delicious, but I think that it didn’t have strong and weak points. Strong, strong, strong. Although it was a three-course meal, it didn’t give that much of a burden. The overall picture wasn’t that good. That’s why it’s the Red Team. It was the composition that had it all.”

Chloe’s corners of the mouth raised. The muscles on her face were pulling, and her two eyes were rolling everywhere as if she was anxious. She said not to be nervous, but in the end even she couldn’t resist it. Jo Minjoon glanced at Kaya and Anderson. Both

of them had expressionless faces so he couldn't know what they were thinking about.

Alan opened his mouth.

“I will vote for the Blue Team. In the case of Emily, she pointed out the composition. But I think that they have showed us outstanding skills that even cover the lack on the composition. The main was especially good. Actually, in the case of beef stroganoff, it's no different to cooking two different things, but the quality of any side didn't fall at all. In the case of the Red Team, it was loyal to the basics, but in overall, it gave the feeling that it wasn't that much fun. It was like going to a tasty restaurant in a town. That's why it's the Blue Team.”

“I think differently than Alan. It was loyal to the basics and was still delicious. That's quite a difficult thing because you get more restrictions. And that restriction was made for the chefs to make the customers enjoy for countless years. But of course, I think highly about the Blue Team for having that delicious dish even after slipping out of the normal guidelines..... But even so, my heart inclines to the Red Team.”

Jo Minjoon clenched his fist. Two votes. Two votes for each team. Now Serguei or Rachel had to vote for them and it was done. He thought that perhaps, they may win. It was at the moment he got that thought. Sergui said with a casual voice.

“Blue team.”

And nobody said a thing. Rachel frowned and asked.

“That’s the end?”

“It was delicious.”

To say one thing, but for it to be that... Rachel let out a sigh. Just when was he going to fix this character of his of wanting to do whatever he wanted?

“Then, only I am left. Now that I see, my choice will decide it all?”

Rachel smiled faintly as if it was fun. Jo Minjoon, Chloe, Kaya, and Anderson opened their eyes abruptly and just looked at Rachel’s lips.

“I.....”

—

“Urghh!”

Toilet. There was one person that was in the toilet bowl vomiting. It was Chloe. She vomited to the point that tears gathered in her eyes, and went to the washing stand while staggering. There was a person there.

“.....It’s that bad?”

“I think I got too nervous.”

At Kaya's worried face, Chloe forced a smile. After washing her face like a cat, Kaya lent a towel.

"Thanks."

".....I like you."

It was a serious voice. And at the same time, it seemed like she said it while bringing up the courage she didn't even have. But of course, that courage was only moving her mouth and tongue. Her eyes and head evaded Chloe and was just looking at the floor.

Chloe laughed.

"I like you too."

".....I don't know who to cheer for."

Kaya said with a sad voice. She let out a sigh and sat on the washing stand, and then turned to look at her butt with a frown as if water still remained on the washing stand and had wet her pants. Chloe smirked and remembered the thing that happened just now.

Rachel gave her vote to the Blue Team. Even so, she was expecting for her to vote their team because they had used ingredients Rachel liked to make the dishes. But the result wasn't like that.

‘Food must give admiration close to shock to people. And for me, the Blue Team was a little more shocking.’

At those words, what kind of complaint could you say? Chloe mumbled as if she was self-deprecating.

“Did I lack too much? Perhaps if Kaya, you have been together with Minjoon, you would have won right?”

“.....Don’t say such things.”

“Sorry. But I get depressed for nothing. I knew that this day was going to come someday.....”

Kaya hesitated and hugged Chloe and patted her back with awkward hand movements.

“This competition isn’t everything in our lives. Don’t be so nervous. I will always be cheering for you, and not only now. And you will be able to do well. You aren’t crooked and leaning like me.”

“Why end the comforting words with self-deprecation?”

Chloe got at the verge of crying as if it was a sad thing. Was Kaya’s low self-esteem regretting, or was she just sad at this situation? That was something even she didn’t know. Kaya bit her lips and said.

“Then, you too don’t do it. The self-deprecation. And don’t suffer. I.....”

Kaya smacked her lips. I don't want to see my friend suffering. She wanted to say those things, but she didn't know why it didn't get out of her mouth. Chloe slowly separated Kaya. Was it because of the vomiting, or for another reason. There were tears in the corner of her eyes.

"I will do my best."

"Yeah."

"Thanks. For worrying like this. Honestly, I thought that only I was acting friendly."

Kaya didn't reply anything. Chloe wiped off the tears with the handkerchief and looked at the mirror. Flushing face and messy hair, it wasn't that good of a look. Kaya slightly looked and said.

"If you need some time to cry letting it all out..... Should I go out?"

"No. I still can't cry. Let's go out. We slowly have to prepare for the elimination mission."

Elimination mission. Whenever she heard it, it gave her the chills, but today it was more than usual.

As they got out to the hall, Anderson and Jo Minjoon were talking about something. Chloe put a faint smile and approached them.

"What are you talking about?"

"What should we be talking about? It's obviously about the

elimination mission.”

Anderson replied with a casual voice. Kaya frowned.

“Do you always have to talk like such a jerk?”

“I don’t think that it’s something I should hear from you. And, do I have to act in a tragic way like a protagonist of a new-school drama?”

Kaya and Anderson growled and glared at each other. Chloe coughed and said.

“Guys, I have something to talk with Minjoon..... Can you give us some space?”

“Talk about what?”

“If she asks for space, she doesn’t want to tell what it is. Don’t act so tactless and come.”

“.....I will be going first.”

Kaya glared at Anderson and moved her feet. After they both left, Jo Minjoon looked at Chloe’s face with a strange expression.

“Talk about what?”

“.....I’m sorry.”

“If that’s what it was about, there’s no need for you to be sorry about. Rather, I should be the one to feel sorry. You picked me, but I lacked too much. I’m sorry.”



Chloe bit her lips and lowered her head. And after that, he could only see the crown of her head and her nape. A skin that wasn't all white maybe due to her having mixed blood. The moment Jo Minjoon slightly turned to look away, Chloe opened her mouth.

“You won't hate me, right?”

“Why would I?”

“Even if I beat you in this elimination mission.....”

“Chloe.”

Jo Minjoon cut Chloe's words. Chloe turned to look up with uneasy eyes. He didn't know what to say at that moment, and let out a sigh. And after a moment of silence, he opened his mouth.

“I'm not that childish. If I get eliminated, it will be because of my skills. It's not your fault. So don't think about that. If I beat you, will you hate me?”

“Never.”

“I'm the same.”

“.....Yeah. You will.”

She did nod and show a faint smile, but on her face, it still had some darkness and sadness that couldn't be expressed in any way. He wanted to ask her why she was like that, but he thought that at the moment he asked that, Chloe would crumble, so he couldn't open his mouth.

But in an instant, Chloe's expression changed. Just like she wore clothes made by gentleness, her face became soft and tender in an

instant. It was the face of the Chloe he knew.

“Let’s go in. The mission, we can’t avoid it.”

“.....You aren’t overdoing yourself, right?”

“Of course I am. There’s no time where I acted without overdoing it in a mission. And today is the same. The both of us can’t win but..... At least, we may all be able to smile. So let’s work hard for that.”

If you failed, won’t it be normal to cry instead of smiling? He thought like that, but he didn’t point that out.

“Right. Let’s smile.”

The moment they got in the kitchen, only two countertops remained. It was organized in a way that they could only watch each other.

‘They are cruel.’

Thinking about that, he saw one small box on the countertop. Did it have ingredients in it? Joseph opened his mouth.

“Today, one of the two must leave Grand Chef’s house. For one of you, this will be the last mission today. And that’s why we prepared what would be the most suitable mission for you. That’s what I’m talking about.”

“And we knew that it’s not something we should be thinking

about, but you have to think of it. Open the boxes.”

At Alan’s words, Chloe and Jo Minjoon opened the boxes. And at that moment, their faces showed perplexment. The thing that was inside of the box wasn’t an ingredient...

There was a mirror in it.

## Chapter 99: The Mirror Recipe (2)

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“.....A mirror?”

Chloe mumbled with a perplexed voice. It was understandable because a mirror appeared instead of an ingredient. Joseph said while smiling brightly.

“Yes. It’s a mirror. Hold your mirrors. What do you see?”

“Me.”

“That’s will be this mission’s theme. Yourself. It’s good if it’s your signature menu, a dish that contains your life, or the thing you like the most. You can also make something you are confident on. But of course, you will have to make something that may amaze all of us.”

“The theme is really vague?”

“There are more cases where problems in life are vague rather than direct. You have 30 minutes for cooking and 20 minutes for designing the recipe. Think of your recipe in that time.”

At Joseph’s answer, Chloe just looked at herself inside the mirror. A face that didn’t even have cream applied. Just what did she have to cook..... Did she get too accustomed to cook on what others asked her to? She felt this moment to be unfamiliar.

When Chloe was simply feeling unfamiliar, in Jo Minjoon’s head, a crossroad appeared. Actually, a cooking that contains his nature happened at the vegetarian mission, with the Korean table meal. The reason as to why he prepared it was because he wanted to deal with his Korean roots in the mission, and there was the

stimulation he received from Chloe. Chloe's 6 points potato soup, at that the he felt weirdness, but the others ate Chloe's food deliciously.

And then, he thought. That there was no need to court solely on the cooking score. Even if it's a familiar meal, it can be fully delicious. But what were the results of that? The judges said that it was good cooking, but it didn't suit to the mission.

‘Will it be different now?’

But the answer that rang in his head was ‘no’. Something that didn't work then, wasn't going to work now. But of course, he could make a Korean meal with a higher score, but in the end, it would be a luxurious dish masked by the familiar meal.

In the end, Jo Minjoon shook off the seduction and kept designing the recipe. He didn't even look at the low scored ones. It was a battle with his life on the line. He couldn't show a sloppy dish now. Warmth and comfort. He already knew that this competition didn't accept those things. This place wasn't the Grand Housewife, but Grand Chef, so of course, he had to make food that would work for the judges.

‘But what kind of food is like me? Korean? Italian?’

Jo Minjoon, at the moments question, couldn't reply anything back. He had eaten more of Korean cuisine food in all his life, but the thing he cooked the most was Western and Italian. After that, it was only Japanese. He hadn't cooked many Korean dishes. Only

simple things like bulgogi, jaeyook, and fish boiled down in soy sauce. Genuine Korean meals, honestly speaking, took too much effort to make at one's house.

“Did you think already?”

“Not yet.”

At Chloe's question, Jo Minjoon shrugged his shoulders. As he slightly glanced away, he saw Anderson and Kaya watching them at one side. Looking at the two of them that were putting a fierce expression made him relaxed.

‘What was the thing the guys liked more?’

There were 4 things in which Jo Minjoon had achieved getting 8 points. Dak galbi, pork galbi, risotto, and jelly with curd. There weren't any similar points. And it was the same for nationalities. For risotto and pork galbi, it gave a feeling that Korean and Japanese cuisine was mixed. Risotto was from Italy and the jelly and curd was from Europe. But of course, bringing up statistics for only four things was a funny thing.

“The thing I like the most, what I'm the most confident in.....”

Jo Minjoon mumbled still. A dish he likes the most in the world, there were no such things. But of course, if he had to pick the most delicious thing it would be the 10 points calf cheek meat, but just because of that, it didn't mean that he favoured calf cheek meat. It was only that the dish was overly perfect.

‘If I get to open a restaurant, what kind of restaurant will it be?’

It was a question he had already heard from the other three. And then, he had replied that he would work in a luxurious restaurant. But it was a really vague answer. A place that served dishes with no identity couldn’t become a luxurious restaurant.

If you were to take into account the identity, in the end Jo Minjoon could only become a hotchpotch. This dish, that dish. He had a lot of experience cooking this way. But just naming a dish that he could only make with his own ability..... It would be a dish that you would have to take into account the harmony of every ingredient. Because even if the estimated cooking score given by the system was low, he could show an absolute strength by bringing up the harmony and balance of the recipe.

‘.....Fruit. A dish served with fruit sauce.’

He thought of that, and it hit. Actually, when he approached Western cuisine, the most amazing thing was that they served a dish with fruit sauce or purée as the main dish. And it was a sauce made by using pesto and fruit. In Korea, they did use zest or pear juice, etc., but rather than using it by itself, there were more cases where they mixed those ingredients. A sauce that brought the flavor of the fruit itself, it could only be new.

He thought for a bit about what to garnish it with. But in the end, the answer he came up with was duck. Duck was an ingredient that may looked easy to handle, but was quite hard to make deliciously. If you cooked it for even a bit longer, it would get tough and have a fishy smell. But what kind of chefs wouldn’t even know how to do

that much?

Now that he had grasped the direction, his thoughts also got faster. He thought about many fruit sauces, and changed the cooking methods for cooking the duck, and then, the answer appeared.

‘8 points.’

Perhaps, if Chloe brought the most of her like last time and got 9 points, he would lose. But it was unavoidable because in the end, it meant that he lacked compared to Chloe. And he didn’t expect getting 9 points, because he still had to concentrate to the most for only making an 8 points dish.

“Start.”

Alan yelled with a blunt voice, and Chloe and Jo Minjoon went towards the pantry. When he was taking the fresh basil, orange, orange marmalade, duck breast, corn powder, chicken gravy, and paprika Chloe approached him and said.

“Are you confident?”

“I don’t know. I will have to do it for now.”

“.....Right. Good luck.”

It was a conversation that only left an uncomfortable flavor. Jo Minjoon hurried to return to the pantry and turned the pan and the fire on. He had to put orange, orange marmalade, and chicken



gravy in a suitable amount and boil it.

Just looking at this, you would think that the process for a recipe which you could get 8 points with it was too simple because the ingredients were too simple. However, there was one thing Jo Minjoon realized recently. That even if you use the same ingredients, according to the ratio, the difference of the flavor was like heaven and earth. With just the difference of one tea spoon, that small difference of the flavor could ruin it all. When Jo Minjoon cooked an 8-point dish, he was concentrated to the utmost. He could only get that score if he concentrated.

Jo Minjoon carefully stirred the sauce. When the sauce boiled up while still it still was watery, he added a little bit of corn powder. It gave the flavor of corn, and at the same time it gave texture to the rough mud like sauce.

He maintained the sauce warm and Jo Minjoon proceeded to roast the duck and paprika. The paprika juice and duck oil met and it started to boil together, and the part of the skin turned yellow. He didn't add in more oil because the oil would make the aroma of the orange sauce loose.

His mouth was shut, and the holes of his nose quivered. His eyes shone calmly, and he couldn't hear anything aside of the oil. Jo Minjoon turned over the chicken breast. The exterior that got seared just well shone with a thin coat of oil.

He finished cooking the breast meat and put it on the dish. After that he started to softly draw an S shape with the orange sauce in his spoon and placed the breast meat and the paprika around it. At

least in the exterior, it seemed to be a success.

“Ah.....”

A moan was heard in Jo Minjoon’s mouth.

[Roasted duck breast with orange sauce and paprika]

Freshness : 89%

Origins : (Too many ingredients to show)

Quality : High

Cooking Score : 7/10

Not everything could turn out as he wished to, but now that it turned out like this he felt like he would break. What was the problem? Did I boil the sauce for too long, or the roasting of the duck wasn’t that good? He couldn’t know. Because if he did know it, he wouldn’t have made the mistake in the first place.

He still had 30 seconds left for cooking. But he couldn’t do anything in that time. At that moment, he heard a disgusting sound from his heart. It was so disgusting that he couldn’t believe he was thinking that way.

‘Perhaps, if Chloe also.....’

He wanted to throw up. Until now, he had said that chef mentality and what not. He had said that they were friends, had an affection. In the moment of danger, to think of such thing like this.

If his skills weren't enough, he just had to get eliminated. He didn't like surviving through other's sluggishness. On top of that, we are talking about Chloe.

But even after he thought like that, he couldn't help but find himself feel relieved the moment he saw Chloe's dish. Her dish was also 7 points. Chili japchae. Even if he didn't look at the score, he could know it, because the chili japchae with flower bread was an ordinary familiar meal. Compared to the ones from Chinese restaurants, it had comparatively less splendid ingredients, and she hadn't put any special things in the sauce. It was normal. It was a chili japchae that just suited with that word. Not being 7 points for her skills lacking, but because it was a dish that didn't seem to have any motivation to go higher.

‘.....Just why? Chloe. Why did you choose this?’

He wanted to ask her that, but he couldn't. The judges were calling for them. The dishes were placed on the table, and Serguei said casually.

“Neither of them are splendid.”

“Just because it is splendid it doesn't ensure that it is delicious, and because it is not luxurious it doesn't mean that it also isn't delicious.”

“Even so, what you see before you eat it can decide the flavor. Even if it is delicious, if you serve it like dog shit, you will feel like eating dog shit. But well, this isn't to the point of being dogshit.....”

“Let's eat first.”

The judges calmly started to eat. The first dish they ate was Jo Minjoon's. Because if they ate the chili japchae first, the flavor could be covered by that intense flavor.

The sweetness of the orange and the hidden corn powder. The flavor of the duck breast that was between it was quite fine. However, that was all. Rachel said without hesitating a bit.

“You made the sauce quite well. But the duck is a bit disappointing. It seems like you tried your best to smear oil all you can, but basically, duck breast doesn't have that much oil. Of course, it's more dry than chicken breast. You did well in roasting the skin crispy..... But with only the oil that comes from the skin, it wasn't able to moisten all of the meat.”

“I think the same as teacher. Of course, if you gave it to normal people they will just say that it is delicious. However, if they were real epicureans, they would be able to notice even the slightest lacking points. Minjoon. Have you cooked duck breast many times?”

“.....I thought that I have, but thinking about it, it doesn't seem to be the case compared to the other ingredients.”

“That's what is reflecting in this dish. Could you call this as just copying a famous cook book? But I got the feeling that you were still inexperienced.”

Saying it in easier words, the idea was good but you couldn't properly recreate that. Jo Minjoon shut his mouth and also his eyes, to the point it hurt. Joseph looked at him acting that way and asked.

“We gave you a mirror as the theme. For you to pour yourselves in the dish. Why did you make this dish?”

“Because it’s the most fun.”

“What part?”

“Making the sauce with fruit, and roasting in the frying pan. These are the things I tried when I first started cooking. And, that was more fun and amazing than any other things. Perhaps, it could feel like this because of the strength of the memory..... But if you told me to pour my self, I think that it’s the best for my original intention. This is that.”

“It was good up to there. But I think that it should be good to throw away the sloppiness as when you first got that intention.....”

Joseph let out a sigh. About when his sigh ended, the judges were already wrapping the chili japchae in the flower bread and putting it in their mouths. It was delicious. The flower bread was just warm and soft, and the abundant vegetables and meat oil in the chili japchae and the chili oil gave a deep flavor just like a well cooked pig fat. But.....It also had its own disappointing points.

The judges all had complicated faces. Jo Minjoon understood them. There were no flaws in the cooking. The recipe was also loyal to the chili japchae’s recipe. But basically, it was a really basic food. You would say that half of the cooking process in Chinese cuisine already ended on the knifing process, and in the case of chili japchae you only had to slice the vegetables and fry it in oil.

“Why is it chili japchae? I think that I have certainly told you

when I announced the mission that you must be able to amaze us to the utmost. Honestly speaking, chili japchae is delicious whoever makes it. And it's that much familiar. So, would you be able to amaze us with just this?"

Chloe hesitated for a moment. She carefully looked at the five judges, and then opened her mouth cautiously.

"Actually, I'm a little tired."

".....Are you talking about the competition?"

"Uh.....mm, it's similar, but no. You have to always make something new. Something special, magnificent. I like cooking, but I also like cooking the same things. The difference that appears even in same dishes, I also like the feeling when I discover those things. Things like egg rolls aren't special at all, but I like those delicious and familiar dishes. Familiar meal? I don't know. I wonder if there's a need to separate it as that. And I also have my doubts on luxurious restaurants giving a luxurious feeling only with serving a small amount of food in a big dish."

Perhaps, she had accumulated all of those things, but even while saying those long words Chloe didn't even get stuck once. She bit her lips with a suffering face.

"Of course, I also like this time. I got to know things I didn't, and the feeling of pulling my creativeness more than ever and placing myself on an evaluating stand wasn't bad at all. But the theme was mirror. I am basically this kind of person. Rather than luxurious and immense things, simple, ordinary and easy things reach me more. That dish is me."

Jo Minjoon slowly listened to those words. He remembered the potato soup Chloe made. And he also remembered the many dishes Chloe had made until now. She continued talking with a voice as if she was about to cry, but with a stately expression.

“I’m not embarrassed about that kind of dish. And I don’t think that I’m miserable because there’s no need to.”

“But customers will.”

Alan replied in a calm voice. He also understood how Chloe was feeling. However, reality was usually different to their expectation.

“If you open your own plain restaurant, it can be done. However, the ambition of a chef makes him want to always cook a perfect dish with good ingredients. And that day will also come looking for you. At that moment, you won’t be able to get satisfied with that dish. Don’t say that you will. Countless chef I have seen were like that. At first, they simply made something delicious at a cheap price. Is there a need to be overly delicious. There’s also a worth in a restaurant that’s for customers to take off a meal.”

Alan paused for a moment. He let out air longly and continued speaking with a heavy voice.

“Yes. There is some worth. But the treatment is different. Your treatment towards cooking, and towards you. Go to a luxurious restaurant. There aren’t cases where food is left on the dish, aside of when it doesn’t taste good at all. However in normal restaurants those cases are normal. Because it’s cheap cooking. It doesn’t feel

wasteful even if you throw some. The respect towards the chef that kind of dish can only fall. If you are able to keep working without getting hurt in that kind of situation.....That wouldn't be bad. But there won't be many people that think that you are the best. Luxurious isn't luxurious for nothing. And this Grand Chef, is a competition to pick the best chef in the world, just like the name implies. It's a competition to make a chef that every chefs aspire to become and follow."

Chloe couldn't reply anything. She only looked at her chili japchae with strengthless eyes. Rachel said with a calm voice.

"Your meaning is gentle and warm. There wasn't ambition in your dish, but there was in Jo Minjoon's. Chloe, Alan doesn't want to say that this dish has no worth. He's saying that it's a lonely and difficult path."

".....Yes."

"It isn't that this food is lacking. The flavor was good, and you have also shown your philosophy. Only that there were some parts that slightly didn't match with this competition's basic nature."

Chloe shut her mouth. The judges shared their opinions for a moment, and then nodded as if they had agreed. Emily opened her mouth.

"The eliminating participant has been decided."



## Chapter 100: The Mirror Recipe (3)

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Once the conclusion had been made, the one who left the Grand Chef house was Chloe.

Chloe had a simple recipe that brought a delicious flavor, and Jo Minjoon's lacked a bit but had a fine recipe. If you asked who of the two was more outstanding, you wouldn't be able to reply easily.

But Grand Chef's policy was clear. The judges made Jo Minjoon do the eliminating mission because the Korean meal he made didn't match with the competition. There was no way that would change now.

The conclusion was made. Jo Minjoon lived and Chloe died. While sitting on a sofa that was at the lobby, Jo Minjoon kept putting an absentminded face. It wasn't that Chloe eliminating was a shock, but he hated himself for wanting to survive even through the misfortune of others. He thought that he was going to be free from that greed.

“.....Why are you putting on that dark expression?”

It wasn't that familiar of a voice. As he turned to look back, Rachel was looking at him. Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly and said.

“It's not the time to put a bright expression.”

“Although a friend got eliminated, you survived. Aren't you happy?”

“We weren’t together for long, but she’s a friend I really appreciated. I shouldn’t be happy. But perhaps I am. And I’m scared because there may be some of that thought in my heart.”

“If you are a person it’s normal to think like that, there will be no one to blame you because you aren’t a moralist. And there’s no need to. Look at Serguei. Was he a moralist?”

Jo Minjoon, instead of replying, rolled his eyes with an awkward expression. Even if it was by joke, he couldn’t even joke his great sunbae. Jo Minjoon asked with a low voice.

“Why are you paying that much attention to me?”

“Because I fell for you. For your tongue. That’s a blessing given by god.” (PR:I knew it! Just kidding.)

Normally, it was a compliment that you would only be happy with. However Jo Minjoon couldn’t do that. It was also a surprise for Rachel because there wasn’t even a trace of happiness in Jo Minjoon’s face. Jo Minjoon asked back with a low voice.

“Then, if I didn’t have this sense of taste you wouldn’t even have paid attention to me in the first place.”

“.....Probably. But is there a need to?”

“The ability I have is different to what you are thinking of, Rachel. Perhaps, if you are really looking for someone with an absolute sense of taste..... She would be better.”

Jo Minjoon talked like that and looked away. Kaya, that had finished her interview just in time, flinched at Rachel turning to

look at her so suddenly.

“.....Why are you looking at me?”

Rachel didn't reply and looked at her feeling that something hanged in her chest. Serguei was also like that, and now, Jo Minjoon too. That the one they had to look for was Kaya Lotus. It could clearly be seen that she had talent just by looking at her cooking. If she hadn't known Jo Minjoon, she would probably have been the gemstone she would take as a disciple.

‘Am I making a mistake now.....’

Rachel's gaze sharpened. Kaya silently sat next to Jo Minjoon and opened her mouth.

“Why didn't you go yet? That old man Serguei disappeared right after it ended.”

“Serguei has a restaurant to run.”

“And don't you have one?”

“I'm only the owner. There's a separate head chef.”

Rachel talked like that and turned to look at Jo Minjoon again. Even if Kaya was a nice gemstone, she wouldn't be as good as this youth in front of her. That was her judgement.

“Do you have any plans after this? Be it winning or getting eliminated, you should have some plans. Ah, am I being too

intrusive?”

“.....You aren’t particularly. If I win, I would have to go to many events as Grand Chef’s winner. After that, I would have to get in some restaurant. And if I’m lucky, I may even get received as a head chef. But in the first place, I’m not even ready for that.”

“There are geniuses at times. There are also those that receive a Michelin star after becoming head chef at the age of 20, and at 30 they get their third star.”

The moment she said that, Rachel’s eyes became teary. Rachel said with a low voice.

“But if you really think that you don’t have talent, come and look for me. If you need teaching, I can teach you all you want. I wanted to tell you this.”

“.....You didn’t come all the way here just to tell me this, right?”

“I think that you may get more moved if I say yes.....But unfortunately that’s not the case. I also have to announce to the world that Rachel Rose isn’t dead yet. I can’t keep living as an elderly forever. And.....”

Rachel’s eyes moved to Kaya.

“Today’s dishes were good. I also want to propose to you. One day, you will need my help. And don’t hesitate to come and look for me when that day comes.”

Rachel stood up.

“I’m sorry to take the time of you young’uns. I will pray for better results from now on.”

Kaya looked at Rachel’s back getting farther with confused eyes.

“Why is she getting like that?”

“What?”

“She’s strange. To go and look for her. And what’s the day we will need her?”

“Just receive it as good words. It means that she holds you in good regards.”

“That means that.....?”

Kaya rolled her eyes upwards as if she was still confused. Jo Minjoon smirked and replied. His burdened heart got lighter, even if it was a little.

“Don’t mind her. You just act like yourself.”

Kaya didn’t reply anything and just looked at Jo Minjoon. She also had eyes, and was aware of her surroundings. And she could clearly see that this situation wasn’t that comfortable for him.

“It’s regrettable that Chloe got eliminated..... But there’s no need for you to act as a sinner.”

“Rather than a sinner.....”

“It’s that face. Although it is regrettable, even so..... I’m honestly happy. Not that Chloe got eliminated, but you still being

here.”

Her eyes shone seriously. And Jo Minjoon just looked at her eyes. He had never felt that her sky blue eyes, under her dense double eyelids was this deep. And the skin that didn't have make up and the part under her eyes was felt more clearly than ever. It was to the point that he wondered if he had seen her with only one eye all this time.

Was it wet with saliva or if it was originally moist, her lips that shone with the help of a reflector opened. But Kaya turned her head. Anderson and Chloe were coming in through the lobby. Chloe laughed awkwardly.

“Hello.”

“.....Why the sudden greeting?”

Kaya replied with a weird voice. Anderson frowned.

“Don't speak to those that died.”

“.....Saying that I'm dead rather hurts me.”

Chloe put on a teary face. Anderson coughed with awkward face and sat down. Kaya sharpened her gaze.

“Why don't you keep your words first?”

Anderson couldn't say anything. Jo Minjoon let out a sigh and

looked at Chloe. It wasn't that he had particularly done anything wrong to her. Just at that moment, he had thought of a really selfish thing. If you were a person, you couldn't help it but get that thought. But he was sorry because of that because Chloe treated him like a real family. And at times she was so gentle it made him misunderstand.

“.....I'm sorry, Chloe.”

When Jo Minjoon said those words, the ones that were next to him all put strange faces. And it wasn't an exception for Chloe. She opened her mouth as if she was perplexed.

“Why are you sorry to me?”

He couldn't reply anything at that question. It was a really embarrassing thing to reply back. And even if he did say it, it would only hurt Chloe. Jo Minjoon forced a smile. He didn't want to send her with a suffering face.

“No. It's nothing. Thank you for what you have done.”

“Why thank me.....”

Chloe scratched her cheeks with an awkward face. Kaya asked with a voice that you couldn't even say by joke that it was cheerful.

“But why did you do that?”

“Huh?”

“The mission? Why did you suddenly make a familiar meal? You could make an even better dish.”

“I wonder..... There are those situations when your mom is lecturing you, and even if you know that if you reply back it will only get longer, but you do it anyways. I think that I felt like that.”

It was a weird and convincing reply. When Kaya and Anderson were nodding, Jo Minjoon just looked at Chloe without saying anything. Chloe, too, seemed like she wanted to say many things, but she couldn't open her mouth maybe because of Anderson and Kaya. Anderson glanced at Chloe and suddenly brought his handphone that didn't even ring to his ear.

“Yes, Martin. Yes. Right now? Understood.”

Anderson stood up and looked at Kaya.

“Hey. Get up.”

“What? Why so suddenly?”

“Martin says that he has something to ask. We have to go for a moment.”

“.....I wanted to be a little more with Chloe.”

Kaya pouted her lips with a sad face. But she couldn't act spoiled when the PD was calling her. At that moment, Anderson's and Chloe's eyes met. Anderson smirked, and Chloe that saw that could vaguely guess the situation. Chloe blushed and moved her feet sluggishly. Jo Minjoon mumbled with a weird voice.



“Why is Martin calling them?”

“Ye, yeah. It doesn’t happen normally.”

“Well, if they come back we will know.”

Jo Minjoon looked at Chloe. They sat facing each other with a table in the middle, and they looked tactfully at each other for different reasons. Chloe slowly opened her mouth.

“I got to go first.”

“.....We will be able to see again. Cooking, you will keep doing it, right?”

Honestly speaking, the words she had said to him kept roaming in his head. It had stimulated him, and at the same time made him worry. Would she think that this path wasn’t suited to her, and leave it? Chloe smiled merrily and nodded.

“Don’t worry. I’m not planning to stop. I just..... resisted for a moment. This cooking can be done, and that cannot. I don’t like differentiating that much. I told you that I’m going to run a restaurant.”

“Right. You said that you were going to run a couple restaurant. I hope for your dreams to become true.”

Jo Minjoon said while putting a soft, yet sad smile. Chloe just looked at his smile. She liked that expression she could see at times. Because she could feel that he thought about her. At Jo Minjoon’s one smile, Chloe imagined tens, or twenty things. She saw things that weren’t visible, and heard what wasn’t hearable.

Chloe forced a leisure voice.

“If I want to run it, money is money, but I need a husband to run it together. And a chef husband on top of that.”

“Ah, that’s also true. It will be a really difficult dream.”

Jo Minjoon smiled bitterly. Chloe hesitated for a moment. Perhaps, this one sentence could ruin it all. But she couldn’t step back. Anderson had even lied and gave them space. Perhaps, her self right now would be too shabby..... But if she couldn’t even bring this words, she wouldn’t become shabby but miserable. She wanted to at least avoid that.

Chloe opened her mouth. Through her lips, her tongue that was more watery and red than it showed itself through that space and hid again shyly. When he thought that a ‘whew’ sigh was going to get out of her mouth, Chloe’s eyes opened up clearly.

“.....I would like it if it was you.”

At that moment, Jo Minjoon’s eyes shook. He slowly looked at Chloe’s eyes. He looked at that fierce waterfall of emotions, that whirlpool. He opened his mouth, but that wasn’t to say some words. It was to let out a noiseless expression of his perplexion. Chloe still looked at Jo Minjoon.

Worry and expectation, shyness and boldness, and love was contained in her eyes. No, it wasn’t only her eyes. Those things were contained in her flushed face, trembling mouth, and on her tears. On top of that, it was also contained in her clenched fists. So

clearly he didn't understand how he couldn't feel it until now.

And those things flowed through words.

“I would like it.....If you were in my restaurant.”